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SERMONS

BY

RICHARD WINTER HAMILTON, LL.D., D.D.,

LEEDS.

SERMONS

BY

RICHARD W. HAMILTON, LLD., D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"MISSIONS: THEIR AUTHORITY, SCOPE, AND ENCOURAGEMENT;"

"NUGÆ LITERARIÆ;" &c., &c.

"The inductions of sound philosophy harmonize with the impressions of the man, who, feeling his own moral necessities, yields his cordial assent to this mystery of God, and seeks in its provisions his peace in the life that now is, and his hope for the life that is to come."

Abercrombie's Philosophy of the Moral Feelings.

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TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

ATTENDING IN ALBION CHAPEL, LEEDS,

This Volume,

AS A FEEBLE TESTIMONY OF GRATITUDE,

FOR THEIR

UNVARYING KINDNESS AND FORBEARANCE,

DURING THE

NINETEEN YEARS OF HIS MINISTRY AMONG THEM:

AND AS A FAINT MEMORIAL,

WHICH HE HOPES WILL PREVENT THEM,

WHEN HE IS NO MORE,

FROM FORGETTING HIM QUITE AT ONCE,—

IS DEDICATED,

BY THEIR

FRIEND AND PASTOR.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author submits, with unaffected diffidence, these Discourses to the Public eye. They have been written at distant intervals, and in incomplete portions, as his much-occupied time would allow. He fears that, consequently, there may be sometimes a recurrence of the same expression and thought. This may as probably be the case in the same, as in different, Sermons. It might have been better, if the length of a few had been curtailed. But he must frankly confess, that preparation for the Press is to him an irksome task, that he was obliged to drag himself to it, and that he seldom had patience to review what was already composed. He should not have published, but he was so often requested, especially by many of his ministerial brethren, that refusal was likely to seem fastidious and perverse. Being pledged, he was compelled to proceed; but how often has he regretted that he was ever foolish enough to give that pledge! For the *doctrine* he offers no apology,—it is his joy in life, and his hope in death. The *style* will be, *as usual*, severely attacked, should criticism deign a notice: he must meekly bear the censure and penalty of an irretrievable offence. He can only do his little, in his own way.—The subjects are general, but various: though scarcely any reason, better than that of caprice, can be assigned for their selection. They were those which had been either most

recently delivered, or could be most easily recalled. Nineteen years of a pastorate in one place, if studiously devoted in the faintest degree, must have accumulated an amount, out of which it is not the simplest of labours to choose.—He has the hardihood to ask one thing,—(though the caution cannot apply to those *divining* spirits which do perfectly judge of a book without reading it,)—that this Volume be not thrown aside as utterly worthless, until its Discourses be regularly perused. He hopes he shall not be accounted an offender for a word. The whole of its value, if it may pretend any, cannot be determinable by the uncouthness of a phrase, or the infelicitous structure of a sentence. If it shall be proved that his reasonings are vitiated, and his statements are incorrect, he shall bow to that judgment. Still will he stoop, if the censor be of a sufficient order of intellect to warrant a jest and sneer. Only let him not be reproved (as he has sometimes been) in a vein of language, and with a course of illustration, which inspired no stimulating zest by containing any superior model.—Be his present Publication dealt with as it may, no high hope of success will lend its aggravation to disappointment. With strictest truth he can say,—whatever auguries his friends draw in its favour, and whatever hopes they indulge of its acceptance,—in the language of Virgil's Lycidas: "SED NON EGO CREDULUS ILLIS."

LEEDS, SEPT., 1833.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The first series of Sermons by the late Dr. R. W. Hamilton, of Leeds, was published in 1833, and for many years has been out of print. For a long time an extensive enquiry has been made for the Work, which it has been thought desirable to meet by again presenting it to the public as originally issued.

Leeds, Jan., 1864.

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SERMON I.

THE INVIOLABILITY OF CHRISTIANITY.

Galatians i. 8.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

This "curse, causeless, shall not come!" Still it is too possible that man, easily beguiled and naturally hostile, may fall into the guilt which provokes so tremendous a denunciation. But is it not rash to point the menace farther than our race, and to give it a range among other and the most elevated orders of existence?—It is a fearful imagining! a stroke of eloquence in its most vehement mood and expression.—It invokes the supernatural—it supposes the monstrous; it verges on the horrible in sentiment and feeling! Probability is set at defiance; a temerity, more than metaphorical, breathes through the awful Vow!

It is at least a supposition very boldly conceived, and strongly mooted. For, from what we can learn respecting these high and holy beings, they, among all created natures, would be most reluctant to interfere by such an act of impious usurpation. Whatever information we can acquire in reference to their history and character constrains us to treat, as an elaborate extravagance, the idea that they are capable of innovating upon "the glorious Gospel,"

whose wonders they delightedly explore, whose triumphs they gratefully celebrate. The "elect angels" are beyond the reach of temptation; their probationary discipline has ceased. *This*, were it not so, would scarcely be the trespass into which they would rush or be betrayed. Otherwise there would be a second revolt in heaven, the enormity of which must make light the first, and leave it forgotten. Let but such malediction avenge such outrage, and Lucifer set not in night equally black, nor was the Great Dragon bound with links equally heavy. The later and more guilty rebels would not only reflect from their visages, and emulate in their spirits, the daring and the deception of *him* who was a murderer and a liar from the beginning: they would refine upon his cruelty, and delude with more than his guile. Indeed, he *has* "gathered this iniquity" to himself. No form of Satanic malignity, no mark of Satanic apostacy, is more descriptive and prominent than hostility to evangelical truth,—in influencing its concealment, debasement, and disbelief. Too tempting was this sacrilege, hating as he did both heaven and earth, to remain unperpetrated!

And there are considerations founded on the nature of these pure and lovely creatures, which compel us to regard this hypothetical instance as extreme. They are not wholly unknown to us, nor estranged from those affections which we can appreciate. They have, ere now, put on human form, and human countenance has, ere now, shone with their radiance. We have "come to an innumerable company of angels," and they have "encamped round about" us. We can speak with precision of their temperament, we can pronounce with confidence what will, or will not, be their conduct.

—They "do always behold the face of" God. His glory is the element of their being, the sunlight of their joy. Now they are engaged in its study, then transported in its vision, and again they strike their harps to its praise.

Each disclosure of purpose, the unveiling of each perfection, is a new occasion and source of their bliss. Their felicity retains but one character, and knows but one origin, whether their employment be contemplation, acclaim, or flight to distant worlds. And where, but "in the face of Jesus Christ," shines out "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God?" Where, but in "the glass" of the Christian revelation, can they "behold with open face" the convergence of its brightest splendours? Nature, by its side, is dim; and Providence but catches its reflected illumination! And will the spectators of such a scene—the six-winged seraph, the eye-filled living creature,—renounce a Gospel to which they owe their clearest discovery of the Infinite Excellence, and, consequently, their richest fruition of the Infinite Plenitude? A Gospel which adds royalty to their "thrones," extension to their "dominions," fame to their "principalities," and strength to their "powers?" "Any other" would destroy the grand exhibition which this presents of the Divine character; and extinguish that "glory of God" which can only "lighten" the celestial city, so long as "the Lamb is the light thereof."

—Their disposition is pure benevolence. As the attributes of the Deity may be resolved into love, so the godlike virtues of these spirits refer to the same principle. Since that consists in commiseration of suffering, as well as manifests itself by complacency in good, so mercy mingles with their "good-will to men." Their task may sometimes be to break seals of judgment, to discharge vials of wrath, to ring out trumpet-peals of doom—but love in all its degrees constitutes their essence and pervades their being —gives beauty to their robes, and lustre to their crowns—gilds the sphere in which they shine, and attunes the harmonies which they warble. And what but the Gospel furnishes scope for its exercise, or justification for its indulgence? What boon can be compared with this, or

what channel does there exist for such a communication of perfect love? Their benevolence but awaited immediately to follow, "after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." Their very nature must be reversed—their most intimate sympathies, their most tender yearnings, must be abandoned—when one of their myriads shall descend the messenger of "another gospel," or become the corrupter of "our's."

And the *offices* with which these ethereal sainted beings are invested—offices from which we derive the greater portion of our knowledge concerning their dispositions, and by which we are chiefly brought into contact and alliance with their doings—preclude the fiction, and debar the possibility, of any other gospel originating in their counsel, or receiving their sanction. He, who "reconciled all things to himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven," and "gathered together in one all of them in Christ,"—has incorporated in the "whole family of heaven and earth," the "angels who kept their first estate," and the "many sons whom he brings to glory."

—Angels "desire to look into these things." The "sufferings" and "glory" of Christ engage their most fixed attention. *Their* eyes are not yet open to the imposture. *They* have not yet arrived at the unworthy matters which are supposed to offend our taste, and clash with the temper of our age. To us "these things may be foolishness," they may receive our high scorn and bitter contempt: but spirits of the highest order and of a celestial residence, are described to us as bending in an awe-struck attitude, as gazing with a prying research, when such themes are unfolded for their meditation. They are intent upon them, wrapt in their studies, enamoured of their charms. The Gospel must forego its character, or angels must recall their admiration, before it can suffer this insult, or they discover this vacillation.

—Angels "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth."

Contrite spirits and broken hearts have an attraction for them which they cannot resist. As their Lord came not to "call the righteous but sinners to repentance," so they are filled with an ardour and excess of joy in witnessing the penitent, far greater than they evince over "the just who need no repentance." Let man, the most degraded, the most disowned—the slave, the outcast—in the desert cave, on the ocean billow—chasten and afflict himself, and angels are immediately at his side with all their sympathy. From no mine can they pluck a gem rich as the sinner's heart-wrung tear, to catch and bear to heaven—nor can all the symphonies of the harmonious universe delight them as the sweet music of the sinner's sigh. But it is the Gospel which humbles our pride, softens our hardness, arouses our apathy, convinces our unbelief, alarms our fear, wins our love—and in its absence or under its mutilation, "the godly sorrow of a godly sort" would never visit a bosom. When angels, whose activities are as "the wind," and whose emotions are as "the flame," weary of speeding these embassies and spreading these tidings—when they can view the condition of the wanderer without pity, and his return without interest—then may they consent to the dereliction or perversion of that Gospel which has but, in an Almighty hand, to touch the heart, and all the reflections, the upbraidings, the relentings, the soothings of genuine repentance at once seize upon it, break it, renew it, heal it!

—Angels are "sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." They follow them to comfort them on the deep, to cheer them in the wilderness—they have "charge over them," they "bear them up in their hands," they "deliver them from all evil." They keep the vigil while the subjects of their care sleep, and hover around them wherever they pitch their tent. But without this Gospel, the hope of *salvation* could never have been cherished, the thought of it never realized—and angels would have been

unbidden to conduct one expectant of the heavenly inheritance in his progress towards its possession. Its repeal would be the withdrawment of all the means and blessings of salvation;—and until these offices of mercy overpower their strength, or survive their disposition, to perform them, the benevolent agents cannot consent to modify, or conspire to discard, it!

—Angels carry the disembodied soul of the Christian to heaven. They relax not their aid, they forbear not their sympathy, from the moment of his earliest repentance to that in which they convey him beyond the confines of danger and sadness. Then the glow of their benevolent satisfaction is at its warmest intensity—the completed task is the consummated reward! They love to see the spirit, enfranchised by the body's death, stretching its long-folded wing, and essaying its hitherto unconscious freedom. They stand at each gate of the New Jerusalem as if to keep it open night and day. And while the "great number, which no man can number," receives its accession and hastens its accumulation, no envy darkens their minds, nor stays their ecstacies. In that proportion their pleasure is enhanced, and they feel that their dignity is aggrandized. And what but the Gospel secures our "life and immortality?" Where else is "the hope of glory?" They must see every mansion filled, and the "nations of the saved" clustering on the everlasting hills —heaven itself too strait—and then only will they tear the Gospel from our custody, or supersede it by some idle mockery and spurious pretence!

The fact is this. The Apostle supposes a case most violently improbable, pictures it in the deepest colours, presents it under the strongest expressions; and imprecates a cleaving curse on *his* head, of whatever order of being, from whatever region of space, who should dare to remodel Christianity, or substitute for it another system. The cited instance is set forth with this terrific power, to

cut off the presumption of guiltlessness, and the hope of impunity, from them who only could do this deed. Man is a creature who has always attempted to supplant or debase the Gospel: these things are "in a figure transferred" from man to angels: even their intrusion should be resented, their rapine be avenged: how then can the worm of earth escape? The *greater* is threatened to deter the *less*.

This passage suggests a train of important reflections. But it is requisite to our proper pursuit of them that we be informed of that which is fenced around with these solemn safeguards. What is the Gospel? Is it the concentration of the scattered rays emitted from created objects? Is it the gathering up of the intimations which escape from the silent course of the divine government? We have not so "learned Christ." We esteem it a distinct revelation of what could not be otherwise inferred or guessed: an announcement of a salvation in which we discover, most effectually, our guilt and depravity as implied in that deliverance. Though the entire scheme and the remotest bearing of Christianity may deserve this title, yet is the Gospel most specifically its answer to the inquiry, What must I do to be saved? The doctrine of Justification seems present to the mind of the inspired writer, wherever he employs the term in this epistle: while its connection with personal sanctity and practical virtue, is indissolubly established by all his reasonings and admonitions. He "delivered, first of all," or rather as his "first principles," this Gospel as that "by which we are *saved*." This is its meaning and spirit; it is as inseparable from the Gospel, and without it the Gospel is as unintelligible, as the principle of motion considered apart from its operation, or in other words, that which being at rest ceases to be. The following is the order of the reflections and conclusions which this Apostolic Protest seems to require, and serves to confirm.

I.—THE IMPORT AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE GOSPEL CANNOT BE VAGUE AND INDETERMINATE.

It cannot be reasonably doubted that the first Christians, whatever were their "differences of administrations and diversities of operations," had a "like precious faith," and a "common salvation." They coincided in "the first principles of the oracles of God," in "the principles of the doctrine of Christ." They "obeyed, from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered them." "The form of sound words" was inculcated with the precision of a lesson, and the authority of a law. The characteristic of the Gospel was alleged to be its *truth*. This was, to the sophists of that era, a strange and novel pretension. To require faith to a testimony only so far as conformable to fact, only so far as supported by evidence, appeared to them a startling affectation. Yet, this was the tone which the primeval disciples assumed—and as *history proved* what religion hallowed, we need not wonder at their port of magnanimity and valour. "They could do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." Hence their belief was definite and avowed. Neither did confusion cloud their judgment, nor strife divide their interpretation, nor suspicion canker their "singleness of heart." "Sound and good doctrine" they opposed to "fables;" "love of the truth" united them; they were encouraged to come to "the knowledge," and bidden to "the acknowledging," "of the truth." With this the Apostles were "put in trust;" they were "stewards of the mysteries of God." Their power was ample; they "were teachers in faith and verity." They wore the manner of conviction the most entire and unshrinking, and justified their followers in its adoption. The language current among them was, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." This was no conjecture,

but assurance ; no faltering, but infallibility. So "established, strengthened, and settled" were they, so "rooted and built up," borrowing the description from the tenacity of the root and strength of the building, that the language of the text would neither sound profane nor even forcible ; it struck in with so unhesitating a sentiment, so strong a vow. They consequently affixed particular significations to what they called "the present truth," and would not brandish the curse to defend what was equivocal in its nature, or interminable in its controversy. The Gospel called up a certain set of ideas, a particular class of propositions, in their minds—they had "the full assurance of understanding and of faith"—they "understood what they said, and whereof they affirmed."

But such statements are frequently contested in our times. It is denied that there was uniformity of opinion, that Christianity is dogmatic, that the Saviour dictated a particular creed, that the Apostles were authorized to propound one. The following disclaimer is employed as a general abandonment of all such claim, "not for that we have dominion over your faith."* But though the first sight and sound of this language might seem to leave them to any latitude of principle or interpretation, the slightest inspection of the context, and the absurdity of the contrary supposition, will refute the gloss. Paul disavows all use of tyrannic power through the means or by the circumstances, of their religious profession : he will abstain from all such stretch of his influence, and abuse of their confidence : but he subjoins what denotes any thing rather than a license for the indifference of sentiment, "For by faith ye stand." "The foundation of the Apostles" was one of inspired teaching and ordinance, not that of the sinner's dependence for acceptance : and their foundation was held together by "Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone." They were commissioned to

* II. Cor. i. 24.

"teach all nations,"—they were "set for the defence of the Gospel,"—they were the accredited representatives and organs of the ascended Messiah,—they were filled with the spirit of his mission and knowledge of his will,—they were in "his stead,"—and spoke and wrote with that awful impress and emphasis which He imparted to them when about to leave them: "As my Father has sent Me, even so send I you!"

In the fixed character, we recognize the true perfection of the Gospel. It is the same through all ages, not changing to every touch, and varying beneath every eye—but unfolding the same features, and producing the same effects. It is a system of particular tenets—these, it is important to recollect, are *truths*, and partake of the necessary unchangeableness of all which can boast this designation. The evidences of truth may differ, but it cannot be more or less than truth. "The word of the truth of the Gospel" has the same strict meaning, the same express design, as of old: and he who adds to it, or takes away from it, offers it an equal indignity, and does it an equal wrong.

Amidst the conflicts of opinion, rife and strenuous as they are in modern days, it is an anxious inquiry, a solemn problem, *are we right?* Do we "know the truth?" The anathema which is prefixed to this Discourse, never could have been uttered unless the Gospel had been limited to a distinct meaning, had been susceptible of a certain interpretation. How important that we escape it by renouncing "any other Gospel!"

How shall we know when we have attained to a just apprehension of "the faith once delivered to the saints?" It will be easy to charge us with arrogance: it will be foolish in us to shrink from the accusation.

Is the Gospel "worthy of our acceptation?" Is it sufficiently clear and perspicuous to be conceived? We would avoid all naked and unprotected assertions, but

maintain that a believing knowledge of it may be acquired, that such a perception should be allowed a place in the mind, to the exclusion of all distracting doubt and misgiving; and that we are warranted in resting these immoveable conclusions on the laws of moral certainty.

We do not make light of *scriptural investigation.* This is the basis and index of all genuine belief. We possess a divine revelation. When it is the part of science to anticipate the facts of Nature and bend them to its preconceived theory, then may it be wise and legitimate to forecast what such revelation should contain, and to measure it by that self-formed standard. The inductive principle, which is our familiar boast, is often reversed when the sacred volume is the subject. Men of any thought see indeed, the dilemma of inconsistency into which an open violation of it would sink them—but mixing the rules of inquiry with the business of *internal evidence,* they set their assumptions against the plainest dictates and soundest criticisms. All they do is prompted by their care of the divine character, and their reverence for the divine code, which otherwise would be left profanely compromised and cruelly exposed! We, however, do not fear but that God "will have pity on his holy name," and cannot suppose that he will "disgrace the throne of his glory." We do not presume to be more tenderly jealous of his honour than himself. And taking with us "the Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation," we embrace all their inferences as well as facts, doctrines as well as testimonies—relying on the veracity, committed to the scope, and abiding by the conclusions, of the whole. "What saith the Scripture?" is our only demand; what it saith is our only criterion.

Another guide to the *discrimination* and the *selection* of *the truth* is the *moral influence* of the system which professes to constitute it. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is a test applicable to the schemes of Christianity,

as well as to the character of its disciples. Such moral influence extends greatly further than acts—it reaches to the tempers and affections of the mind. If there be one form notorious for its encouragement and spectacle of supercilious arrogance, pert conceit, and contemptuous selfishness; if it should boast that the less serious the mind, the better prepared it is to welcome its claims; if it may be marked by a flippant levity in its treatment of inspiration; if it has wrought every sentiment and feeling derogatory from the person and mission of Christ; if it can be proved utterly inefficient upon the habits and passions of the multitude; if it stand freezingly opposed to all generous effort towards the spread of the truth; if it proceed to materialize the soul, and to lull it after death into a dreamless insensibility; if it extinguish each devout sentiment as it subverts all holy obligation; if its very peculiarity is irreligious indifference and captious speculation; if its effect, according to the measure of its operation, is always seen in worldly conformity, sectarian bigotry, bitter invective, and moral torpor; then we can not doubt that it is from beneath, and not from above,—nor scruple to decide that it was not from heaven, but of men! Such a scheme, denying that "there is angel or spirit," cannot be identical with that which the awful penalty of the text was summoned to defend. Impotent, indeed, must be the threat which is raised upon a poetic machine, a mythological fiction!

To point out the tests of truth and the symptoms of error, would lead us into too wide discussion; most of these are indicated by the aspect which the several systems turn on the *functions* and *characters* of our Lord's *mediation.* He, as a Prophet, is slighted, when the instructions of his word are denied a peremptory importance, are adulterated by tradition, or are even maintained for the purpose of rejecting his still enlightening influence. His Priesthood is desecrated wherever its true expiation is

reduced to a figure, or its one offering is multiplied by a superstition. The Kingly authority which he wields is offended when man would mimic its prerogatives, or alter its institutions. Exalt the Saviour; surround him with all his honours, attach to him all his claims; let him be the centre to which all refers, let him be the end in which all consummates; make him pre-eminent, give him glory; bow the knee, cede the heart; and there can be little room for error, and need be no fear of condemnation.

The general *concurrence* of the great Christian sections, in sentiment, will not be overlooked by them who seek for divine truth. If it exist amidst so many discordances of character, temper, and interest; if it prevail under most opposite masses of will-worship and ecclesiastical domination; if it be uniformly witnessed in connection with elevated devotion and holy zeal; this identity of substance may be inferred to be the truth, while these must be its artificial, hurtful, or appropriate adjuncts. By whom has the Trinity, the Atonement, Sanctification, with other kindred tenets, been rejected? What community and creed have abjured them? Some few, most inconsiderable for their extent of number, and only notorious by their violence of boast, may, here and there, "contradict and blaspheme." But challenge the common and "mutual faith," "spoken of throughout the whole world,"—what a unity does it unfold, what an integrity does it preserve! Combined with other causes of confidence, such general agreement will have its weight in determining us that "this is the true grace of God in which we stand."

There can be no reasonable probability that they are distinguished by the correctness of their opinions who disavow the belief of any Divine influence. The fact which the Scripture assumes, the adherents to evangelical doctrine declare from the experience of themselves and others to be true, that "the natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God," that he is not only inapt but inimical. Many promises are contained in the inspired volume that "the eyes of our understanding shall be opened," that we "shall know the truth," that the Monitor shall "lead us into all truth," that "his anointing shall teach us all things," that if we be "in any thing otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto us." Now, all who profess the belief of this enlightening influence, agree in those essentials to which we have referred—if *it* be real, *this* is the result. With scarcely an exception, their opponents deny its reasonableness and existence: if any admit it, their conception of it is most unsatisfactory. Is it a process of conviction unnatural or unsound—that if all, who cherish divine influence, arrive at certain doctrinal conclusions, those conclusions are more likely to be just, than such as connect themselves with a "despite to the Spirit of grace?" "No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." "Every man who hath learned of the Father cometh unto Christ."

We are thankful that the true believer has a *secret persuasion*, which he cannot explain, as well as many more external, which he can. He has "the witness in himself." This is involved in the "witness which the Spirit bears with his spirit" of his acceptance—but is so far distinct that it more particularly rises from the commendation of sacred and vital truth to his conscience and heart. It is so minutely applicable to his case, it is so intimately associated with his history, affecting him at all points, succouring him in all distresses—"the tried stone" of his trust, the "sure and steadfast anchor" of his hope—that he cannot doubt of its truth until he must despair of its efficacy. And it is remarkable that such an intuitive perception and internal impression are restricted to the consciousness of them who "hold the head;" while in deviating from it, these parties disclaim any share of the

self-closing evidence, and any toleration of an idea which they denounce to be utterly unphilosophical. But their disclaimer only goes thus far: the attestation of *others* they cannot invalidate. And therefore the inquirer may not inaptly argue that the positive averment of so many remains unimpaired by this negative, that such intimation to the soul is as attainable as it is desirable, and that it is the peculiar and precious "secret of the Lord," which is with them who "know of the doctrine," and are "of the truth." The impugner of the Saviour's God-head and sacrifice might spare himself the trouble of scorning and renouncing this pledge. He is absolved from the charge. But his jeer does not undeceive our judgment, or disabuse our conviction. And he might more reasonably think and infer that what is the property of all from whom he differs, is only withheld from himself as the mark of his error, and the punishment of his disbelief.

Unless there was this invariableness in the Christian system, if a fixed determination of its purport is impossible, we should be at a loss in what manner to follow the conduct and imbibe the spirit of the early Christians. The lofty confidence we admire in them must, when imitated, degenerate into the vainest arrogance. Those lights and examples of the church would only ensnare us into a mien and attitude ridiculous as profane. It would be the dwarf attempting to bare a giant's arm, a wayfaring man aspiring to a prophet's vision.

And, on this supposition, instead of congratulating ourselves that we possess the *written* word, we stand in a disadvantageous position. How are we blessed in not having seen, yet having believed? We can resolve no doubt, we can obtain no certainty. Far better would it be to sit at the feet of Jesus. It could not be expedient that He should depart: the Comforter does not supply his place. Or we might have interrogated the Apostles. Their living lips might have yielded the satisfaction which

their records do not secure. The oracle may still respond, but its sounds are inarticulate, and its decisions evasive.

And it is plain that there are duties urged upon the disciples of the Gospel which are sufficiently incoherent, should it be itself unsusceptible of strict definition, or should it not authorize an unequivocal assertion. If there be one obligation more enforced than another, it is to "steadfastness of faith in Christ." Nothing is more commended, nothing more earnestly and frequently impressed: "Stablished in the faith as ye have been taught." "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." "I trust ye shall acknowledge these things even to the end." But if the Christian faith be vague and indeterminable, then constancy to it in any meaning, and according to any conception, must be as pertinacious as its avowal is precipitate.

The history of the martyrs, who have sealed with the prodigal sacrifice of their blood, not a name or sound, but a set of opinions which they deemed a just representation of Christianity, would appear a tragedy without a moral, were the Gospel, in sacred language, to be "yea and nay," or incapable of being adjudged. In vain did they pour out that life-stream, when it was but a risk what truth it might attest and what cause it should subserve. It was too vast a price for a doubtful part, and too reckless a stake for an incalculable issue.

There is another spirit at work among us. It can inculcate a due firmness of erroneous opinion, it only condemns as rude and dictatorial, the adoption and retention of opposite sentiment. It is charitable, in its own favoured phrase, towards all the doubting and unconvinced; it can show favour to the honest infidel, however impetuous and professed. Its contempt is reserved for those who, having with certainly no less honesty read the word of God and searched the scriptures "whether these things are so," maintain their most cautious impression, and uphold their most deliberate

judgment. This contempt would fall strangely upon those who are celebrated for continuing in "the Apostles' doctrine:" and it might invert itself and become apology for those whom the same record condemns. Might it not advance in extenuation of those who "were ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth," that they were unfettered by prejudice, and still prosecuting inquiry? and offer in exculpation of "unstable souls," that they were only seeking truth wherever it could be found, keeping their minds open and their studies unpledged, ready to obey all possible convictions.

But the "truth as it is in Jesus," *is* contained in that Word which is *truth itself:* there it is laid up as in a casket and hallowed as in a shrine. No change can pass upon it. It bears the character of its first perfection. It is the wisdom of God and the power of God. Like the manna and the rod in the recess of the ark, it is the incorruptible bread of heaven, it is the ever-living instrument of might, without an altered form or superseded virtue. "He who runneth may read." Nothing but clouds of unholy passion or of mental vanity can obscure it. It is only impervious to the "desires of the *flesh* or of the *mind*." "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost." And such is its simplicity when men read it as learners and receive it as sinners—that we can dare a contradiction to its plain interpretation, and feel that if "an angel from heaven" were so to belie it—torturing it by sophistry, annulling it by conjecture, and recasting it by prejudgment, he should suffer the "curse" which dreadly guards our faith from every violation.

This impassioned style prompts an idea beyond the intelligibleness and fixed nature of the Gospel,—

II. Its Divine Origin and Authority cannot be controverted.

The history of Saul of Tarsus, has often been cited with happy success in confirmation of Christianity. Part of

the evidence which it supplies is common to other narratives of conversion, but a greater part is of a character quite distinct. As in all it is competent to set over against each other *mistake* and *deception*—so we might in this, show the impossibility of such a mind being seduced into error, or tempted to imposture. If the *first*, then the most masculine mind, the most powerful counter-impression, a judgment most cautious in its use of evidence, a sobriety most jealous over each exercise of imagination, proofs always abundant and always augmenting, sign and suasion, are no presumptions of truth, no means of certainty. The Gospel is either unsusceptible of support from reasoning, or our intellect is unfitted to weigh that reasoning. If the *second*, we must transform the human being, and conceive of selfishness covetous of sacrifice, ambition intent upon dishonour, pleasure wrapt in austerity, hypocrisy sighing for death.

His accession to the Christian side derives much of its singularity from his hostility—hostility neither ordinary nor in the least degree controlled. It could only at any time have been exasperated into fiercer fury by the suggestion that he should soon be won to the number of the proselytes and defenders already enlisted. Had augur or soothsayer hazarded that prediction, no improbabilities could have occurred to the hearer more blind and excessive.

If any name sounded dreadful in the ear of the first Christian it was that of "the young man who kept the raiment of them that slew the martyr Stephen." That name was a brand of cruelty, it was a voice of blood. It passed forth as an omen, as when nations have beheld the meteor-sword flashing above them. In vain do we search for any redeeming virtue, any exculpating circumstance, in his character and history. The ordinary palliatives of youth, temperament, inexperience, supply the actual aggravation. A rank maturity of evil contrasts itself to his

youth, a phlegmatic steadiness of malignity does violence to his temperament, and an inventive redundance of aggressions more than makes up for the disadvantage of inexperience. He settles into a cool and gloating ferocity, he revolves new and more dire schemes of persecution. He can revel in the carnage of a promiscuous massacre with an unshrinking eye and unrelenting heart. He never seems warmed by a generous enthusiasm. There is none of that fine sentiment, that moral poetry, which sometimes has retrieved the sallies of an extravagant zeal. His acquittal of dishonesty is the condemnation of his cruelty!

And if any conversion appeared placed beyond the limit of hope and all reasonable expectation, if any could be "too hard for God," or lying within those moral impossibilities which He allows, because they establish his perfection of nature and rule of will—who could have wavered to pronounce that it was this? Sooner might it have been surmised that Caiaphas would have "looked on him whom he had pierced," and, in bitter compunction, would have rent his ephod, and cast his tiara into the dust. Sooner might it have been anticipated that Pilate would have worshipped that King whom neither the seal, nor cohort, nor death itself, could imprison in the tomb. And even when the thousands of the populace, which had insulted him in every form, spit on him in the hall, and jested with him on the cross, are "pricked to the heart," —it does not impress us as so strange, nor does its announcement strike us as so unlikely, as that this stern foe should pause, that this fell monster should soften!

His earliest prepossessions would render the contingency of such an event most minute and distant. The blood of his high ancestry would rebel against the change. His education at the feet of a Rabbi would confirm his attachment to "the Jews' religion," and enable him to defend it with adroitness. His sect, as a Pharisee, would induce

the pride of a more strictly ceremonial consistency. Bigotry would call in public favour to its aid, for he was esteemed the champion of his nation and his faith, of his country and his God!

Persecution could not find a more ready instrument. He enters into its service with an unparalleled quickness and force of congeniality. He is formed to it at once. He puts forth all its perfect instincts and fangs. Who does not tremble as he proceeds? "Damascus is waxed feeble and turneth herself to flee." The terror, scourge, and spoiler of the church—the pestilence withering all into a desert—the conflagration "setting on fire the course of nature, and itself set on fire of hell"—the star of disastrous influence which falling to the earth converts its waters into gall and blood—to what can he be compared? How long shall he be suffered to make havoc of the saints? Will not "God avenge his own elect?" "Are not his eyes upon the truth?" Where sleeps his thunder? "Judgment slumbereth not." The rebel falls: amidst his most intoxicating dream, his most applauded career—in "the greatness of his way"—he falls! Jesus of Nazareth has struck down his foe. Well has the bolt sped, true has the arrow flown! But that light streams not to blast, that voice upbraids not to condemn, that power smites not to destroy. Oh, what a change has moved over his heart! What "a new creature!" He weeps. He abhors himself. "Behold, he prayeth." The hands which "haled men and women to prison," which a few hours ago received the fatal commission, and until this moment grasped the murderous weapon, are now penitently clasped, and suppliantly uplifted! The knees which shook not when he was surrounded by the wailings of mothers and children, whom he made widows and orphans, now pliant as the infant sinew, are bent in earnest transfixing prayer! The eyes, no longer bent in moody scorn or shooting with wrathful glance, now overflow with tears! The lips which "breathed

out threatenings and slaughter," now utter the cry of shame and surrender, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" What a conquest! What a spectacle! So sudden, so enduring! "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" It is a trophy of grace. It is a marvel of Omnipotence. "The lamb may lie down with the lion, the sucking child may play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child may put his hand on the cockatrice' den."

And his conversion raises not alone the argument for the truth of that faith "which once he destroyed:" we must review his mission and apostolate. For though the doctrines he preached were precisely those of the other disciples, and his qualifications for the office as decided, he having seen the Lord, and therefore being constituted virtually a witness of his resurrection—yet two things distinguish his ministry. He learned Christianity from *immediate revelation.* He was indebted to none of the "men who companied together all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among them:" James taught him not his knowledge, nor Peter enkindled his zeal, nor John infused his love. At the foot of the celestial Throne—he imbibed the "wisdom in a mystery," and returned to earth exclaiming, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." In the same manner he derived his *authority* from the "Head of the body, which is the church." So far from this investiture being proposed, or this designation being imparted, by the Apostles, "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." His appointment, his instruction, were direct communications from heaven. Now, there is a double advantage in these facts. Had the Apostles swerved from their Master's truth since his resurrection?—a persecutor is caught up to the third heaven, and descends with all the lessons of that awful discipline. And the comparison establishes the important matter, that the most exact agreement subsisted between the sentiments of the earlier disciples of the Christian

school and this later one, between the elder brethren and this younger one—"born out of due time." An unprejudiced witness, he could say, "Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed." And as the *doctrine* of Christianity was proved to have remained undistorted, so this independence of the other Apostles vindicated all the parties from any collusion. It was like sending down from heaven a second original of the Gospel, and affixing to it a second seal of attestation. The vouchers were written in the same character, the impressions were received from the same signet!

From these statements we draw important conclusions, illustrated and enforced by the text. First: what must have been the *strength and satisfaction of conviction* entertained by the writer! Be it remembered that the conviction has to do with facts. It pertains to no favourite theory, no abstract science, but occurrences which he had proved by sensible observation and perfect consciousness. Wonders had teemed around him; but his own transformation was the most signal wonder of all. Nothing without him could equal what he discerned within. True, the light which shone upon him was "above the brightness of the sun," when he was arrested in his guilty march; but an intenser radiance had filled his soul. True, the earthquake had set him free when thrust into the inner prison and fastened in the stocks; but a mightier power had laid open his heart. True, he spake words of power which cast out infernal spirits; but of more fatal possessions had he been healed. How could he doubt? He knew his cause, and he knew its trustworthy evidence. Mark now his language, and consider his responsibility! He sounds a defiance to the universe! He dares to a refutation creatures of the keenest intellect and largest power! The mind could have felt no misgiving which braves such an inquest, which denounces such a curse. Had room existed for the faintest suspicion, aye for possible mistake, at once

this language had been subdued, and its fearlessness been restrained. He would have spoken with reserve, his curse would have been sheathed in conditions. He would have trembled lest some unknown being might accept the gage, lest heaven should avenge the quarrel. His tongue would have faltered, lest while he spoke, some oracle should burst suddenly at his foot and falsify his assertions, lest some angel should cross his path and "forbid his madness!" And as we can thus estimate the measure and force of Paul's convictions, we may, *secondly*, inquire what weight and credibility should be allowed them. Remember the appeal; consider the man who utters it; inspect his habitudes of mind; follow the lines of his history; try his character by any motives of selfishness and artifice; forget not the meed he loses in the danger he incurs; contrast his meekness and his heroism; combine his indignation of wrong to another with his forbearance of it toward himself; put his conduct to any rack, his design to any analysis; and then determine whether *we* are not safe where *he* is undaunted—whether *we* may not decide for that on which *he* perils all—whether the anathema which *he* dares pronounce does not throw around *us* the safeguard of a divine benediction—whether we ought not to transfer, with whatever abatement of the verbal force and the apostolic authority, these solemn, untrembling convictions from his mind, on which they impress such strength and majesty, to our own!*

But this imprecatory language, proceeding from the present source, not only establishes the divine truth of Christianity—it is available to the proof that

III. Its Efficacy cannot be denied.

Himself a memorable proof of what it could accomplish—and proofs only inferior multiplying on every side—no one having subjected it to more frequent and successful experiment—a witness of its energy on all charac-

* "Splendentia et vehementia sed rebus veris."—Augustin.

ters and among all nations—Paul cannot endure that even the thought of "another Gospel" should reflect upon this. It leaves him nothing to desire. Imagination can invest it with no worthier attributes, nor ampler powers. It had evinced no sign of incapacity, nor could it be charged with a semblance of failure. Sustaining the utmost grandeur of its pretensions, fulfilling the largest spirit of its predictions, only wanting "free course to be glorified," not only "gone forth conquering but to conquer," he shudders at the rapine which would despoil, and the sacrilege which would profane it.

It was not called into operation until numberless expedients of man had been frustrated. Philosophy, after a probation of ages and a felicity of opportunities, sunk dejected on her seat; and declined the reign which she had of old sought to establish over the human spirit. She cherished long and tenaciously projects of amelioration. Socrates pursued her stateliest reasonings—Plato fell entranced into her fairest dreams — and what unassisted reason could achieve, these her sons and champions must have ensured. They spoke of the *becoming* and the *beautiful* in conduct; they applied the genius of their master-language in the refinements of the *necessary*, the *useful*, the *due* in obligation. They had an ambition to elevate the mind and character of man, to correct the evils of society, and to establish a condition of universal well-being. They drew their pictures of an ideal perfection, and held them up to excite emulation. It would be unjust to refuse them the praise of integrity and amiable dispositions. But they knew not the depth of the disease they undertook to eradicate. They struck no blow at the root of evil, and much less aspired to "make the tree good." The plan of each was wrecked, the world was in despair, when Christianity left the bosom of the Father in the person of his Son. From the moment it alighted on earth, it has run a career of beneficence. Men have

been blessed in it. By an invisible process it detaches the stain of guilt from the conscience, and pours balm into its wound. By a power no less than His "who made not only that which is without, but that which is within also," it "renews the spirit of the mind." It still holds fast its youthful prime and strength. Whatever under any circumstances it has done, it can under any circumstances repeat. The sanctified instrument of the Holy Spirit, it pardons as determinately as the Saviour's voice, "Thy sins be forgiven thee:" it purifies as efficaciously as the Saviour's fiat, "I will; be thou clean:" it adopts as truly as the Saviour's recognition, "Behold my mother and my brethren:" it glorifies as authoritatively as the Saviour's assurance, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." If ever a fountain, it is as at the first, exhaustless; if ever a medicine, it is the specific still; if ever a mine, it is impoverished of none of its wealth; if ever a foundation, what will not its present strength enable it to sustain? Take and learn what these Scriptures mean —"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin:" "By the cross the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;" "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." Ah, they have not lost their zest and emphasis! Yet they breathe their sweet savour, and insinuate their soothing charm! They have suffered no diminution, they can exhibit no decay! The tree of life sheds no faded leaf; the sword of the Spirit gleams refulgent, without a spot of rust or abatement of temper!

It was well proved from the beginning. It had entered no congenial sphere. Philosophy, rhetoric, art, were conjoined to superstitions, radicated into all habits and vices of mankind. The very ruins which survive the downfall of polytheism—the frieze with its mythological tale, the column yet soaring with inimitable majesty, the statue breathing an air of divinity—recal the fascinations which it once might boast, and of the auxiliaries it could com-

mand. Yet, these were but the decorations of selfishness most indecently avowed, of licentiousness most brutally incontinent, of war the most wantonly bloody, of slavery the most barbarously oppressive. And Christianity subverted these foundations of iniquity; and yet so all penetrating is its energy, that it did not so much smite them as that they sunk away before it. It sobered passion by reason, and controlled imagination by truth; it excited sensibility by interest, and awed conscience by retribution; compelled gratitude by the bestowment of good, and gained affection by the portraiture of excellence. What a revolution did it accomplish in the laws, usages, opinions, and feelings of the world! It "famished the gods,"* realizing the irony of the prophets in the withdrawment of the sacrifices on which they were supposed to feed; it cast down the temples; it struck dumb the oracles; the images of power fell from their pedestals; the fires of devotion went out on their shrines. It softened the ferocity, and relaxed the pride of manners; it gave justice its exercise, and benevolence its being. It stooped to every ill and woe. Nor was it only a proposal, but a power, to bless; not something to be thwarted by human perversity, but to melt it away. It was a practical victory, a sure triumph. It advanced without noise and pomp, but irresistibly. Its power was displayed in the might of effect, and not in the struggle of operation; in the perfect work, without the intervention of process and delay—like the elemental ray, immediate, piercing, renovating—or the hidden laws of nature which speed and harmonize all its most exact and beneficent results. Christianity reaches the human will, and renews the human heart. And a thousand blessings which may at first appear derived from an independent source, are really poured forth from this: as the soft moonlight is but the reflection of the sun no longer visible, but still not uninfluential.

* Zeph. ii, 11.

We may, indeed, with perfect propriety, demand what occasion has presented itself for something new? What new lights have been thrown on human powers, obligations, and destinies? What sudden secret has been struck out by the inquiries into human nature? We wait but for the proof of its incompetency to purify the wicked, and solace the distressed. That proof has never been produced. What have other systems done? What hold have they fastened on the mind, what strength exerted on the heart? What of vice have they suppressed? What of woe have they relieved? Tame the tiger with a straw! Stem the torrent with a bulrush! This, this is the admirable quality of the Gospel, that it anticipates and provides for every emergency. It is projected on a scale of omniscience. Statesmen have mistaken a people, philosophers have blundered in the estimate of a generation. But its view is warped and darkened by no error: it "plucks out the secret" from the "hidden man of the heart." And it speaks decidedly for the divine excellence and consistency of Christianity, that it is prepared for the most varied circumstances, that it proceeds upon the supposition of the most critical anomalies, that it comprehends the pressure and solution of all difficulties; that it is, in short, worthy and susceptible "of all acceptation." The individual who receives it, finds such an appeal to his character, and testimony to his history, that he is confounded, and asks, "Whence knowest thou me?" In all the intricacy of the most modified humanity, in all the womb of ever-working time, there is not a perplexity which it cannot explain, there is not a contingency for which it is not prepared. It is strong for the grapple, as tender for the embrace. It is equal for all encounters and all trials. For every case it furnishes a ready precedent and a repeated counterpart. By one vast conception it generalizes man, and with as minute peculiarity, it follows and unfolds all his variations. It discerns

"the end from the beginning;" and to every child of Adam holds up "the glass in which he may see his own natural face." It knows the heart's bitterness as if within its consciousness, and applies the soul's medicine as if itself felt the wound. It is the catholicon and the specific —exhibiting such a comprehension of the *all*, as though not an attention could be expended on the *individual*, and such a care of the *individual*, as though no amplitude could contain the *all*. It looks upon our nature with the divine intelligence, and yearns for our salvation with the divine pity.

It is not unfrequently asserted that an age of improvement requires a modification of religion ; that the system of Jesus admits of a progressiveness ; that it comprises in it an expansive tendency. There is much that is objectionable in this language—implying that Christianity is not only elastic to every advance of society and enlargement of mind—but the subject of advance and enlargement itself. The truth is, that the doctrines of this faith are as certain as its facts—the latter being not more historically, than the former are inferentially, true. As the facts are recorded under inspired sanction, so the doctrines are deduced from them by inspired direction. More cannot be put into the original premises and conclusions than at first intended. It is evident that when this is done, narrative sinks into allegory, and lesson into equivocation. The Gospel is fixed in its first meaning, and we are "shut up to its faith." But here we have neither sense of shame nor fear of abandonment. Let nature drop its innermost veil, let science demonstrate its latest truth, and we do not suspect that by such blaze of discovery and such force of conviction, the character of our religion can become obsolete, or its design superseded. Its triumph is, that it anticipates all knowledge and all invention—that nothing of ascertained existence or occurrence, physical or transcendental, can overtake its originality and lessen its

necessity. It always leads the way. It affects not to be the pandect of natural history; but, with its popular phraseology undenied, what of its statements have any of these researches disproved? And in its discrimination of human character, what scheme has even approached it in its fulness and impartiality? What annalists and publicists have known the heart so well? Their failure has always been at the particular point of its success. "The Spirit speaketh expressly" all that is wanted to the knowledge of man. It is in virtue of this acquaintance with our nature, and of the remedy which is suggested by it, that we doubt not that it will outstrip every competitor, and prove that in its constitution are the impulse and germ of all amelioration. Its efficiency has been established at all times and by all experiments; it has been reduced to an unfailing principle, and we need, at the present, no more hesitate about it than we are accustomed to do when we speak of those celestial mechanics which give to the sun its centre, and the planets their rounds.

Many fair promises have been made to us, that if we consent to part with the Gospel, the surrender shall be compensated. We are assured that the loss will not be irreparable. That all its invaluable effects would not immediately perish upon its formal abolition we can readily believe—a root would still be in the ground. Though the source of day had withdrawn, the warm glow of the sunset could not but survive for a little. But this is due to Christianity, is a proof of its benignity, and cannot dispose us to a less reluctance, or bribe us to a less rigorous exaction, in the barter.—Now, what is the Gospel? Contemplate it as an *ideal*. It draws into itself what is most tender. It assembles around it all that is fair and great. It is the model of pity. It is the archetype of loveliness. It is the perfection of beauty. It contains all the first ideas, the original principles, the virgin essences of whatever can belong to eternal worth and excellence. It has

caught the earliest beam of divine irradiation which the Father of lights suffered to fall on immensity. It bathed in the fountain of life when first that overflowed its infinite hiding-place, and has secured and turned to earth the river of those living waters. Truth has nothing more majestic. Simplicity has nothing more exquisite. Benevolence has nothing more touching. Only in this can they develope their full proportion, and obtain their unconstrained exercise!—Then regard it as a *reality*. Instantly it quits the repose of abstraction. All is found capable of application. It knits itself with all the business of life, as well as with the moods of retirement from it. It dispels the guilt and fear of the sinner at the moment it breathes into him "a divine nature." It blunts the edge of adversity and tears out the sting of death. It is the guide of youth and the staff of age. It is not only a speculation, but a practical thing. Poverty makes use of it to cheer its lot, affliction reclines there its bosom of throbbing agony, and mortality soothes with it the cold sweat and ruffled disquietude of the sinking brow. All wants it relieves, all tears it dries. Ideal or reality, did imagination ever teem with such a vision, or fact substantiate and shape such a system? Then what is to be offered instead? What is the equivalent? Were it possessed of the points essential to any religion, did it "preach another Jesus, another Spirit, another Gospel"—without which declarations any religion would be vain—still we must ask, what grounds existed to require, what plausibilities could be suggested to justify, the exchange? Is the power of the "only name of Jesus" spent? "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Is the Gospel "decayed and waxed old, and ready to vanish away?" But still there would be a Jesus, a Spirit, a Gospel—salvation, regeneracy, good news, glad tidings. No, to add insult to injury, the better to trifle with our grief and mortification, the scheme which is to be substituted not only does not comprise such evangelical

outlines, but treats them with high scorn, and throws upon them unmeasured contumely—it is fabricated with a most contemptuous opposition to them! And what has it done? Having cancelled all that gives a religion its vital character and moral adaptation, silenced the *saving name*, mocked the *renewing influence*, it bids us accept some *prospective* advantages. Inquiry is not yet advanced, and time is not yet ripe, but the future is its own. Its shall be the reign of mind! Its shall be the paradise of virtue! But has it no auspicious commencement? Is there no sheaf of its first-fruits? Is there no fretted line of gold to mark the orient of its day? Our text directs us how to estimate these boasted principles and effects. The substitutions of an angel would be most gratuitous, inadequate, and mean—cursed should he be if he dared to prompt, or endeavoured to impose, them: therefore, how immeasurably inferior, how infinitesimally more worthless, must be the notions of man!

There appears, indeed, a desire to shock each Christian sentiment by the language which many, in these times, have prevailed on themselves to employ. Its feeblest license, and most guarded restraint, is derision. It might surely content them that they have reached the state of mind in which they doubt all evidence, and even presume to define the possibilities of things. There was no need to scatter taunts on those who had not arrived at the same hardihood of temperament. Cruel adventurers! What do ye propose by breaking down the landmarks which the wise and holy have always observed? Why have ye quenched the lights which have burnt through ages, and to which the reverent eye of generations has so long been turned? If your souls be extricated from prejudice, if your powers of vision be disabused, enlighten and awaken not us! You cannot replace our faith, make sweeter our peace, or more abundant our joy! "From henceforth let no *man* trouble" us: we should despise and

trample under foot the succedaneum which "an *angel* from heaven" could bring!

It is a just inference from this strain of indignant deprecation, which forbids whatever could tamper with the Gospel or alter it, that

IV. THE AUTHORITY AND FORCE OF THE PRESENT DISPENSATION OF DIVINE TRUTH CANNOT BE SUPERSEDED.

The mode of discovery which the Only Wise God has pursued in revealing himself to man has, doubtless, ever been agreeable to "all wisdom and prudence." It has been by economies or constitutions. A particular disclosure of his will has been made under a form of external appointment and regimen. That, for the existing time, was the only medium of divine favour and human acceptance. It is no reflection on Supreme Intelligence to compare these dispensations, as it has always adapted them to the actual state of our intellectual capacity, and replenished them with sufficient information to excite the devout and benevolent affections. The twilight followed the morning star, and both heralded the sun in its strength—but only had *that* been detained until our attention was prepared, and our eye was strengthened, for the perfect day.

But all were imperfect because but preparatory. The scene was rapidly shifted, and one took the place of the other. The allowance of knowledge became more generous, and revelation hastened to its point of completion. The "sundry times" sought their "fulness," and the "divers manners" verged on their concentration. And these economies left not to others to pronounce their defectiveness: it was their own witness. They told of better things, of a "new covenant," of "a righteousness which should not be abolished." Each addressed its age with language forbearing and encouraging, similar to that which fell from the lips of Him who was the end and glory of them all,—"And now I have told you before it come to

pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

The perfection of the Christian dispensation is, that it is *final*. In it He has spoken whose voice shall be heard no more until it "shake not the earth only, but also heaven." No other sensible manifestation can be given—the doctrine is not to be simplified, the ritual is not to be defined, to any further extent—nothing more will be vouchsafed to augment its blessings or ratify its credentials. In the fulfilment of its predictions, in the multiplication of its effects, a species of evidence does arise—but it is of the same nature which it has long appropriated, and is rather its prolongation than its renewal. We must, therefore, congratulate ourselves that we possess the "true light," "the perfect gift," the brightest illumination, the costliest boon. None will, in a future time, be suffered to speak of us as "desiring to see and hear the things" which they are "blessed" in realizing themselves. Christianity has received the latest touch, the highest beauty, from the hand of Him who is its "Author and Finisher." "The thousand years"—"the ages of peace," "the days of heaven upon the earth"—will comprehend only "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon." The testimony is sealed, and woe to him who shall add to it, or take any thing away! We have "received a kingdom which cannot be moved." It is, therefore, the common burden of prophecy that the permanency of the Saviour's reign shall equal its glory; that the kingdom which he shall set up must last for ever; that it should receive on his ascension a fixed shape, which neither vicissitude can affect, nor time outgrow. The reasonings of the later writers of inspiration strictly coincide with this; and he who could dare angels to "preach any other Gospel," argues in another passage, "If that which was *done*

away was glorious, much more that which *remaineth* is glorious."

If the Gospel did not "remain," if it was, like earlier dispensations, to be supplanted, nothing would be more foolish and impious than this denouncement of angelic interference. We ought to "look for redemption." We ought to be a "people ready and prepared for the Lord." Christianity, on such a supposition, awaiting some revision, looking for "the time of reformation," it would become us to examine every signal, every intimation, of the promised and desired event. "If a spirit or an angel" should speak to us, it might be the fitting means of merging the present economy into one of more consummate wisdom and grace—and "let us not fight against God." But, being incapable of abrogation, every attempt to displace or amend it must be necessarily most presumptuous and profane. And as the very circumstance that the "word spoken by angels," though "steadfast," was inferior in weight and duration to that "which first began to be spoken by the Lord," so assuredly they could not have the power, did we monstrously attribute to them the will, to innovate upon what the "Lord of hosts" declared perfect and left inviolable—a trust to the church, an inheritance to the world, until "heaven and earth shall pass away!"

The perpetuity of this system might illustrate our *probation.* One transgression of the law, exposing us to the curse, though it does not destroy our accountability, annuls any advantageous use of it. But by the "everlasting Gospel," preached for the "obedience of faith," we are placed in a new condition of moral agency strangely attempered by tender mercy. And it shall be such "a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." But this now being proposed "to every creature," cannot be revoked; and pledged to "even the end of the world," cannot be cancelled. The oath of the Eternal Truth, the immutability of the Divine Counsel, defend it better than

all the curses which gather to burst upon the spoiler's head.

And since the transactions of "eternal judgment" are always described as closing this dispensation, it can only be wound up by them on the event of its durability. That great and last day implies a mediatorial relation,—the Gospel is the standard to elicit "the secrets of men," and Immanuel is judge.

It is obvious that such a dispensation, constituted to be co-existent with all future time, must resist every view which would impress a new form, or foist a strange nature, upon it. And if these views be not only foreign, but hostile to its most simple elements, to its best ascertained principles, then we cannot hesitate for a moment as to the decided part we must take against them. They may be announced in a manner the most sincere, humble, and devout; or with a tone exclusive, pragmatic, and condemning. They may possibly be received by the mind which had hitherto been considered peculiarly gifted and acute. They may have the temporary effect of stirring up the languid feelings, and nerving the remitted efforts, of those who have "left their first love," and neglected "their first works." They may be prized by those who cannot reconcile themselves to religious apathy, but are weary of the daily caution and struggle, self-scrutiny, and self-control, which a proper disposition of piety requires, and by which alone a religious stability can be secured. Against these chimeras we have an effectual antidote in the Gospel. Was it *expedient* that Christ should go away that the Spirit might be given? Then the personal presence of our Lord, in its corporeal property, would reverse the most beneficial arrangement. Was the Gospel intended to require "spirit and truth," in contradistinction of external show and pomp? Then that anticipation must be unfounded which looks for the restoration of some temple-city and symbol-glory. Was the Gospel to diffuse

itself as a universal good without reference to sacred haunts, a Sion or Gerizim? Then it must be a debasement to fetter it with local associations and attachments. Was the Gospel sent to deliver us from the "rudiments of the world," or Jewish economy? Then it must be to throw it back, if we would fashion it after the "pattern of those beggarly elements." Was the Gospel, its authority being settled by miracle, left to lean upon its spiritual worth and demonstrative power? Then it must be a confession of insufficiency to desire that the age of miracle may return. Was the Gospel decreed to "break down the middle-wall of partition" between the "commonwealth of Israel," and the "strangers" from it—the nations sacred and unclean—so that Jewish apostles, Hebrews of the Hebrews, though they had "known Christ after the flesh," according to country and lineage, would "henceforth now know him no more?" Then how wild a perversion of its intention is to be found in the theory which would preserve that people in national distinctness subsequently to their conversion, and give them allocation in their ancient land. Was the Gospel the common property of all, and did all, upon the belief of it, share the common blessing, so that none had "advantage any way," but all distinctions were lost in the intercommunity of believers? Then can it be conceived that the Jewish Christians of Pentecostal times, now amalgamated in the one blood of all nations, the proselytes of eighteen hundred years, have lost their privileges by their earlier conversion, while, as a reward for the unbelief of so many centuries, they who persist in rejecting Messiah to the last, shall be borne to "the delightsome land," and be reinstated in all their ancestral scenes and immunities? Was the Gospel intended to teach us to "walk by faith and not by sight?" Then is it not a descent to its majesty, a falling away from its character and purpose, when "it comes with observation," when sense and spectacle are substituted for its

divine light and intellectual vision? Be not "moved away from the hope of the Gospel." To these fictions "give place by subjection, no, not for an hour." The plain doctrine of Christ must not be overlaid by human fancies and conceits. The prophecies must be interpreted in accordance with its principles, and not its principles be bent to their language. Possessed of the Gospel, remember He is "faithful who called you to its fellowship." "He cannot deny himself." Let these speculations pass you unheeded by—"touch not, taste not, handle not." Be yours a consistent piety, a steady course, a zealous benevolence. All that is novel in the doctrine and the cast of Christianity must be utter deception; and you are warranted and commanded to regard them as figments and dreams. "If they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert, go not forth: behold he is in the secret chamber, believe it not." Such crude and spurious representations make "it another Gospel," introduce an ulterior dispensation; and you know with what emotions, the very idea of this attempt, filled the mind of Paul: "What carefulness it wrought in him, yea what clearing of himself, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge." And therefore has he recorded his interdict, and therefore has he bequeathed his curse: it stands in characters of flame, it rings in tones of alarm: "And if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." But spoken in haste shall it not be retracted? and uttered under excitement, shall it not be subdued? Is it an attitude to be sustained? A bolt to be launched as well as brandished, and left rebounding until sunk and spent in the last fire? His eye does not pity, his hand does not tremble, his tongue does not falter, his purpose does not abate: "As we *said before*, so *say I now again*, if any one preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed!"

It is an inference fully supported by the text, and naturally connecting itself with the preceding reasonings,

V. THAT NO CIRCUMSTANCE OR AGENCY CAN ENDANGER THE EXISTENCE AND STABILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

If the *first* proposition of this discourse be true, the Gospel cannot be set aside by any *new interpretation;* if the *second* be correct, it cannot by any *counter-argument;* if the *third* be just, it cannot by any better substitution; if the *fourth* be established, it cannot by any divine appendage. But still remembering the ceaseless activity, the dark venom, of the human heart—the multiplied causes of hostility—against this religion of grace, truth, and holiness, it may not be quite superfluous to bring forth a consideration which tends to "assure our hearts" that no disaster can affect, no change can weaken, the certainties of its safety.

Against Israel, when "the cry was throughout all the land of Egypt" over the judgment of the first-born, it was promised, "that not a dog shall move his tongue." The completeness of their protection is thus significantly expressed. But when the security of the Gospel is to be most confidently predicted, and most strongly ascertained, *supernatural power* is restrained — a curse encloses it round about, a "flaming sword, turning every way, guards this tree of life." The treasure of all our hopes and interests is beyond the reach of harm; "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal." Man need not be afraid when "principalities and powers in the heavenly places," could they be imagined adverse, might be reasonably and boldly defied!

There is a cowardice which masks an unbelief. It dwells in gloom, is restless with suspicion, "tears are its meat day and night." It trembles, and never shouts, for the ark. It portends calamity, and cannot prophesy good.

The wind whispers in the ear of these faint-hearted ones but to threaten a storm; the glassy surface but curls, and they apprehend all the horrors of shipwreck. Trust they their cause? Lurks no doubt of it within? Why their fears of expanding intellect and increasing knowledge? Can the religion of light be assisted by darkness? Can a too piercing eye be fixed on the truth of heaven? Infidelity has often boasted loud; but we are not, as yet, awed by its authority, or intimidated by its manner: we do not yet forego our belief in Christianity—either inclined to write its epitaph, or chant its dirge!

We do not mean to say that no temporary and local injury can be inflicted on this sacred cause. And chiefly is the perversion of its intentions baleful. Its *grace* is too frequently hampered, its *practice* relaxed, its *simplicity* sophisticated, its *spirituality* secularized, its *dignity* debased. The external shock has, however, more generally consolidated its strength, and ensured its stability. Still it is not less imperative on us to feed the fire, because the assailants cannot overthrow the altar on which it is kindled.

And how feeble are all the powers of human resistance to Christianity! They are as the wax and the tow in the flame. Wit the most subtle, strength the best compacted, the aptest skill, the mightiest influence, have all been arrayed against it. The activity has always been in the ratio of the force, and both in that of the malignity. But have its enemies prevailed? Should its friends be disheartened? "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us."

We have, in the first ages of the Gospel, specimens of every possible variety and strength of opposition? and in the ascendancy which it obtained over them, we can

exhibit the earnests of its continued and ultimate triumph. Sophistry was never more wily than that which it baffled, power more colossal than it prostrated, persecution more wasting than it survived. The second conquest is always easier from the very trophies of the first: its plan is matured, and its confidence invincible. The names, which once expressed the most formidable hostility, are now but bywords of weakness and echoes of contempt: and the monarchies which shed the blood of the saints, and attached fearful notoriety to themselves by their cruel excesses, have perished, like volcanic isles sunk back to the deep from which they had been heaved; or, if in any shape they still endure, only resembling them whose fire is utterly quenched, and which just rise above the waves—a blasted mass of desolation!

And nothing short of a perfect conviction that this is the triumphant destiny of Christianity can do justice to it, or act out that devotion and heroism with which we should regard it. And what better calculated to inspire such confidence can there be, than meditation on this emphatic daring of Apostolic faith and zeal? The whole array of creatures, the concentration of created power, would not constitute occasion of terror or crisis of danger: an angel from heaven would only rush upon a curse: "in God we will praise his word, in God we will put our trust, we will not *fear what flesh can do!*"

It is observable with what intense complacency and delight the being is regarded by the moral universe, who is engaged in the promotion of Christianity. Honours surround him, welcomes pursue him, and a chorus of benedictions bursts upon his head: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace!" But if its herald be thus honoured and greeted, however mean in himself, as loathed is its adversary however mighty. And did an angel, though he could "set his right foot on the sea and his left on the earth," preach any other Gospel,

the curse of heaven and earth should scathe him, and he should "be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit!" —But oh, ye blessed ministering spirits, to whom such an act is most alien and averse, we do not dread, we cannot deprecate, your interference! By all your loyalty to truth, by all your fervour of benevolence, ye could not do it! Ye are gathered together with us in Christ! Ye sing in concord with the redeemed from among men! We will not wrong, by such a doubt, natures so pure, beings so kind; while we feel that the argumentative supposition, by its tremendous force and glaring impossibility, only more plainly assumes, and strongly establishes, how perfectly ye must be abhorrent of the treason, and incapable of the blasphemy!

And these contemplations tend to impress us with the purpose of Jehovah, amidst all the fluctuating scenes of time. It is the Gospel which gives them their meaning. Insulated from this, they pass without coherence, and are laid without plan; they are convertible to no use, and descriptive of no moral. But the Divine purpose thus explains itself. By the light it casts upon them, innumerable events become manifestly uniform and consistent. The end of all things is to perpetuate and diffuse the only remedy for human guilt and sorrow. But for this, our history would be no more drawn out, and our planet cease to roll. This is the cause of Him who hath "the government on his shoulder;" and to this trust there is universal subordination. And he hushes and binds the elements, speaks the calm, commands the pause, that in it the voice of mercy may be heard, the appeal to sensibility may be urged, "Be ye reconciled unto God." The dispensation of the Gospel—with all the state of a *reign*, the munificence of a *gift*, the fidelity of a *testimony*, the sureness of a *promise*—stretches itself out to the utmost limit of mortal interests. It shall endure co-evally with man. Every breath we draw, every moment we exist, every step we

take, is beneath this dispensation of grace. To us it calls, every where it finds a voice, and it shall accent the "last syllable of recorded time." To give it an ampler theatre, all nations shall be subdued unto it; and the ages are held back that it may obtain a longer opportunity. The final convulsion is arrested—the Father, who hath "put the times and seasons in his own power," checks their flight; the Saviour, "expecting until all his enemies become his footstool," is content to wait: and the "souls under the altar" refrain their importunity, and rejoice in the delay. Its trumpet of jubilee shall never be silenced, save by the trumpet of judgment; its light shall never fade, but in the embers of the last conflagration; its "joyful sound" shall never die, except in the uproar and crash of dissolving worlds; its "lively hope" shall only be buried in the grave, and under the wreck, of the universe. All things must be destroyed ere it lose its power or abdicate its claim. The massive architecture of the heaven and the earth takes it into their date, and suspends it on their durability. It lasts while they can last. It only ceases when the mountain sinks, when the ocean dries, when the poles refuse to turn, when the skies shrivel up like a burning scroll—when "heaven and earth shall flee away!" And even then its dispensative form alone is affected—its principles are invariable and indestructible —are of "the things which cannot be shaken"—and shall expand through a still more congenial medium and worthy economy, whose sphere is "in the highest," whose glory is "in light," and whose consummation is "God all in all!" Feeble are our present thoughts, confused our perceptions; we see every thing as from behind a cloud and in a disproportion. Our convictions are more like conjectures, and our speculations, dreams. We "know in part" and therefore perplexedly. Our conceptions are infantile, and as infantile are our minds. But we shall soon emerge from this state of crude fancies and immature ideas.

Worthy sentiments and feelings will fill up our souls. Each view shall be as a ray of light striking its object, and each song be the very echo of its theme. Then shall we adequately understand why Apostles kindled into indignation, and shook with horror, at the idea of "another Gospel;" and why even Angels themselves must have been accursed had it been possible for them to have divulged it!

"*The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.*" Amen.

SERMON II.

THE COUNSEL OF GAMALIEL EXAMINED.

Acts v. 38, 39.

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

The senate of Israel is now in solemn session and anxious deliberation! Though Palestine was considered a vanquished country, and groaned beneath a foreign yoke, still the council of the Sanhedrim retained a large jurisdiction. The Roman policy was very tolerant, paying a nice respect to the religious prejudices and usages of the nations which it had subjugated by its arms. Gallio most properly refused to arbitrate the differences of "words and names" belonging to a particular "law." Festus equally "doubted of such manner of questions." This assembly, therefore, kept possession of its powers, and held its regular consultations, long after the land which it adorned had lost its independence, and become a vassal in the train of universal conquest. It continued to be the high court of appeal. Its constitution was most imposing. It comprised all that was venerable in *religion*—the chief priests and presidents over the courses of the temple. It comprehended all that was elevated in *rank*—the elders and princes of the tribual

states. It added to itself all that was acute in *learning* —a select number of the best lettered scribes. These seventy men were supposed to embody the genius of the ancient dispensation, to constitute the living representatives of an illustrious succession of kings, pontiffs, seers, prophets, and bards. But how unlike, are the hoary persecutors, the fathers whom Moses, at their institution, "set round about the tabernacle," and to whom the Lord, having taken of the spirit that was on his servant, gave the same mighty inspiration, so that they "prophesied and ceased not." "The judges are" not "as at the first," nor "the counsellors as at the beginning." Jerusalem no longer gathered her "beautiful flock." Zion no more travailed with her "precious sons." "How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now *murderers*." A deep and heavy cloud of guilt and doom now hung over its towers. —Before this tribunal a few poor illiterate fishermen, the abettors of an improbable story, the apologists of a crucified convict, have, some short minutes since, been arraigned. But a few months have elapsed from the day in which their Leader, under the triple charge of treason, imposture, and blasphemy, was put to death with every circumstance of ingenious cruelty, and accumulated infamy. His hands and his feet had been transfixed with nails; the sentence of accusation had surmounted his head, while around his brows, in derision of his pretensions, his enemies had platted a fillet of thorns; and the spear of the executioner had pierced his side, and rioted in his heart. Torture had itself been racked, contempt was itself exhausted, in sharpening his agony, and execrating his name. Small was the assistance he was likely to derive from the zealots who have just been displaced from the bar. Did they promise well as the guardians of his memory, and the champions of his cause? He had been betrayed by one, denied by another, and forsaken by

all. His death had struck panic into their spirits. All their hopes fled with his breath, and were buried in his grave. It is true, that informed of his resurrection, they began to rally: and certified with a perfect demonstration of its truth, they set themselves in array. But the authorities, which had decreed and inflicted the sentence, were not to be intimidated. They had sealed the stone! They had commanded the watch! They make light, and speak contemptuously, of this strange report! Yet, soon the case assumed a serious complexion. The coward fugitives who abandoned their Lord, shrinking from the first signal of danger, now presented a show of defiance, and rooted themselves into a stand of resolution, not to be mistaken. Nor did they act alone. Accessions, by thousands at a time, poured into the new confederacy. The city was "filled with his doctrine." It intruded into the recesses of the temple. Its infection had reached the august chamber, where the "masters" and "rulers" of the nation sat in judgment. Hesitation and compromise came too late. The time for debate had gone by for ever. A strong part must be taken, an immediate blow must be struck. The course they took was to confront the partisans of this wide-spreading attestation with all that power can display to overawe, and learning suggest to confute. And what a spectacle of grave dignity, and reverend office, had they to sustain; what an encounter of crafty and malignant opposition had they to resist. How unequal the contest! How stern the inquisition! How hopeless the defence! But there, in yon now vacant space, they stood—the intrepid adherents of the crucified Galilean—whose cheeks shall never more blanch with fear, whose hearts shall never more sink in despair! They were erect and unruffled. Their air and tone agreed to their theme. They knew not to droop beneath the indignant glances which loured upon them. Their faces kindled into the expressions, before which, in after times,

monarchs trembled, and lions are said to have, crouched. Their's was the majesty of innocence! Their's the armour of truth! Their's the eloquence of conviction! The grey-haired hypocrites were cut to the heart. They could not endure another moment the presence so holy, the bearing so undaunted, of the very men, whom they had hoped to put to silence, and to confound with shame. The Apostles were "put forth"—an interval was wanted to recover from surprise and vexation—and in that pause, Gamaliel rises and propounds his advice.

I. LET US EXAMINE THE VIEWS WHICH SUGGESTED, AND THE REASONINGS WHICH SUPPORTED, THIS JUDGMENT IN ITS GENERAL FORM AND INFLUENCE.

The admonition of the text is really a favourite one. It is the subject of common, and almost proverbial, admiration. It receives applause as the very pattern of clear and sober opinion—of sound and discriminating *sense*. It has obtained credit for higher qualities—and here are supposed, by some, to lie the rudiments of profound political knowledge—the acuteness of the jurist, and the comprehension of the statesman. Even the springs of moral nature have been considered as open to its insight. In short, the advice has been the theme of unmeasured panegyric—and the speaker has been ranked among the foremost of those whom nations and ages love to esteem the oracles of wisdom, and ornaments of candour.

And it must be allowed that it discovers a favourable contrast to the current sentiments and practices of those ruder times. Violent outrages were threatened and wreaked against the Christian cause. These it deprecated. It demanded an overt neutrality. It would not oppose principle by force. It relies upon certain tendencies in such principle, to perpetuate or destroy itself. Can any thing be more incongruous than external resistance to opinion?—any thing more foolish than its instigation?—any thing more ineffective than its use? Then may the

"word of God be bound"—then may the human spirit be narrowed within the body's dungeon, and shackled by the body's chain—when the sunbeam can be severed from its source, and coerced by every accident foreign to the laws and operations of light. Persecution is so unreasonable, that whatever is adverse to it takes a strong colour of probability—acquires an impress of sagacity, and a semblance of truth. We have but to read the edict of Decius to extirpate the religion of our faith and profession, and the praise of the counsel which issued from Gamaliel, by the mere recoil of the feelings, may be carried to a disproportionate indulgence.

Yet, after all, this is not a lofty style of thought. It is selfish and timid. It reveals a contracted notion of things. The heart, which beats in such a statement, is shrunk and cold. There is but the cunning of wisdom without any of its nobler claims, and the cowardice of forbearance without any of its proper virtues. In the mediation proposed, we cannot fail to mark the absence of all fine sentiment and delicate sensibility—all independence of character, all love of freedom, all overflow of generosity. A sinister policy dictates the whole; one chilling reference to interest proves how each genial fountain of mere natural emotion was dried up in the man who could confine himself to it; age seems to have frozen any sympathy which interest might have spared; and if there was nothing to censure, there would still be nothing to commend.

But a cold correctness is not the fault of this advice. The advice itself is not unexceptionable. Several objections may be taken to its principles and motives.

1. It proceeds on a misconception of what belongs to *different kinds* of truth, and what may be *their operations.*

We all can understand that truth embraces many particulars. It is true that the sun enlightens our planet, and that our planet revolves on its axis; it is true that straight lines crossing one another, of four unequal, must consti-

tute altogether the same number of right, angles; it is true that certain persons have lived at such a time, and acted in such a way, exactly as history has described them; it is true that we think and feel, though no other can interfere with the evidence of our personal consciousness; it is true that the revelation of the Gospel is given, and that all its contents are certain. These diversities might be expected to operate differently on the mind, according to the degree in which they come into contact with it—affecting more or less its interests and passions.

There could be no doubt that some of the reasonings which the shrewd Rabbi urged, would apply to *common error* and *truth*—those which involve physical objects and external facts, those whose perception leaves our affections and pleasurable susceptibilities in some sort of indifference. Of what can we be more sure than that *error* concerning Nature, with all its train of popular delusions, shall *cease?* Does it not yield to knowledge, as necessarily as night to day? And we entertain the same confidence that once exploded it is not in the power of error to *revive.* Who could restore the vulgar prejudice of the solar circumvolution? Who could raise to its former ascendancy the foolery of certain debasing superstitions? And of what can we be more sure than that *truth,* in many of its branches—scientific and political—shall *prevail?* Does it not dispel the intellectual darkness with the same certainty that light triumphs over that which is elemental? And it is not in its nature, once known and appreciated, to *decline.* Who could annul those strong impressions which, however related to truth, are often blind to the proofs of its establishment? Who could break up that system of observation and experiment which has created for philosophy so distinguished a rank and so proud a name?

And there are sufficient explanations of the causes which influence this recession of error and advance of

truth—this impossibility of the one's restoration and of the other's failure. That can be easily *resigned* which did not touch on our moral nature—when the resignation curtails nothing that we enjoy, and checks nothing that we love. It harmonizes with our curiosity for knowledge, and our ambition of improvement. And that will be readily *embraced* which is speculatively great and attractive—truth, which makes the mind expand and the imagination glow—if it intrude not on the habit of sensual compliance, and bind not a yoke on the neck of mental pride. I have no *interest* in maintaining that colours are inherent in the substance they embellish; and, therefore, as it does not disturb a single portion of my choice or point of my desire, I acknowledge that the effect is produced by a prismatic division of the colourless ray. I have no *interest* hostile to certain problems; no stake of happiness, but that which seeks the satisfaction of knowing the precise condition of the case, whatever the manner in which they are solved. Nothing to my most immediate and intense feelings is it, how many units compose a sum, how many sides constitute a figure, how many atoms build themselves up in a mass. But moral error has another hold—"men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Moral truth may offend by its mysteriousness, its humbling representations, its holy requirements. The man who boasts that he hates error, now finds that it is "the error of *his way*," the idol of a long-cherished devotion, that he must forsake. The ardent inquirer after truth now learns that these propositions must be embraced—that man is a sinner, lost in ignorance, guilt, and pollution; that no effort, on his part, can obtain for him knowledge, pardon, and sanctity; that God alone can impart these blessings; that they must be received with an unmixed sense of gratuitous obligation; that none are more welcome, and none are less, than others to their possession; that the salvation of the Gospel is abso

lutely fashioned on the principle of excluding every pretence of desert and fitness in him who accepts it, and of reserving the perfect glory to its Divine Author. These "are hard sayings!" And, therefore, error constantly renews its opposition; and, indeed, in every human heart wages afresh the long-continued war. And, therefore, truth has to debate its every step, to maintain its every advantage; and, though again and again established, has again and again to work the same process, and to uphold the same vindication.

Observe, then, that *moral error* is not necessarily unstable and transient. It has a co-existence with human nature, and may be traced with distinctness to that source. It is rather a part of it, its spontaneous growth, than any thing foreign which has fastened on it. It is too flattering to the principles of our depravity, too congenial to "the deceitful lusts," to lose its entail or provoke its fate. Paganism still lifts itself up in its might. Antichrist still stretches out the cup of its sorcery. If deficiency of evidence, weakness of claim, perniciousness of effect, could have counter-worked these systems, long since it must have been seen that they were not "of God," long since must they have "come to nought." But they have often recovered the ground they had lost, and have spread themselves over lands once better favoured and enlightened. The "deadly wound" inflicted on the hydra has been "healed." Its resuscitation, as beheld by the prophet, is confirmed by our experience, "it was, is not, and yet is!"

And observe that there is no necessary victory to *moral truth*. It is certain that general sophistry will be detected, that general misrule will be retrieved, that general prejudice will be dissipated; but it is not inevitable that what rebukes a self righteous temper, humbles a vain understanding, restrains a licentious heart, shall be admitted into the convictions and affections of mankind. The thirst for knowledge, the zest of civilization, will

carry us forward triumphantly towards particular results, none of which impose an interdict upon our mental dispositions and animal propensities. But Christianity meets with the inverse reception—indifference to its discoveries, and distaste for its precepts. It is not only a question of historic authenticity and speculative recommendation, it is the *test of the affections.* And, consequently, it is not impossible that such a religion, simply considered in itself, —encircled only by its pretensions, and protected only by its appeals—should entirely fail, and utterly perish. In many cases, as to its local habitation, it is swept away. Continents, whose depths had been pierced by it, retain no more its name. The blood of the martyrs has not seldom flowed to leave a mark for vengeance, instead of a seed for the future church. "The kingdom of God" has been driven from them who hated its benefits and harassed its servants: the opposition has been successful. "Who was able to make war with the beast?" "It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to *overcome them.*" Indeed, "the truth as it is in Jesus," is so pure, so refined, so ethereal, that, self-supported, it cannot survive a long exposure to the shocks, and subjection to the influences, of the present state—that under this noxious atmosphere the plant of heaven must expire! The reasoning of Gamaliel is founded, therefore, on a confusion of different matters—on a supposition that truth of every kind possesses an equal advantage for coping with the prejudice, and an equal certainty of triumphing over the hostility, of the world.

2. This counsel betrays an ignorance of the *supports* on which *divine revelation* must be rested, and of the *mediums* by which it can only be received.

A religion which is "the counsel and work of God," must always be adapted to the capacities of the creatures to whom it is addressed. A religion of this origin must always be *immediately* valuable, and as such must be as

immediately credible. Its business is with the present being in his rapid passage through the day of life—that is, "the accepted time, the only day of salvation." Though it contemplates the future, it does not, with a self-contradiction, draw from it the proofs necessary for the satisfaction of them to whom that future can never be disclosed. As it will require "a reason of his hope" from every disciple, so will it appear itself clad with an appropriate authority, and prepared with the instruments of conviction. If its credentials do not unfold at once to all their length —if some innermost winding of the scroll has yet to loosen—still there will always be a sufficient evolution to answer the most inquiring, and to persuade the most cautious.

Of this indispensable condition in every divine revelation, the casuist of the text intimates nothing. His advice and allegations look another way. He thinks not of examining the title of the candidate for the race, he diffides in every circumstance of the outset, he suspends the venture on the attainment of the prize. To him it is nothing that it has *now* the aspect and presage of one that wins the goal; it may speed towards it without receiving from him one confident judgment, one anxious look. He leaves it to itself. Durability is the only standard by which he will adjudge it. His own remaining life cannot comprise the suitable term for the catastrophe. He perhaps would have asked centuries to have made the issue sure. And had he, it would have been but a slight aggravation of the folly which supposes the precise period of credibility to fall beyond any one man's opportunity of forming a well-warranted decision, whom its proposals and informations have reached. For at that moment, and upon that spot, the argument had assumed its perfect shape, which *now* justifies *our* strongest faith. Christ had risen! All that was wanting was the evidence for the truth of the fact to be derived from the impression and

conduct of its witnesses. It had been given! The Apostles were neither regarded by their worst adversaries as deceivers or dupes. Their recent magnanimity had wrung from them, who were their accusers and judges, another concession. As the grave had not been strong enough to detain the Lord of their faith, so they had been miraculously liberated from their dungeon. Thousands had been convinced, whose conviction was certain poverty and death. Why were not these things accounted for? Was the dungeon-gate ever known to open of itself and let go its prisoners? Was death wont to resign its prey? Did the dissolute become pure, and the profane devout, without a cause? Could any unholy error produce such an extension of piety, sweet affection, and meek heroism? To demand a momentary delay, to wish a more "convenient season," was a suicide of reason, an insult on revelation, a turning away from Him "who spoke from heaven," until that voice should be reverberated from distant ages!

We are not, perhaps, adequately impressed with our own share in this infatuation. Why do *we* believe? The reply which points to the argument of *time* may be in some way and measure, right: but much deception generally insinuates itself in it. May not our assent be gained by the non-existence of any rival cause? May it not be cheaply given because greater inconvenience might attend its refusal? Has not a romantic feeling determined it? Christianity is now a *venerable* thing, time-honoured, sprung from a remote antiquity. It is *tender*—wrought into the texture of our poetry—a source of joyful and pitying tears. Its stronger features are softened down by their familiarity to our eye. Many would think it alike presumptuous to embrace it when new, and to reject it when old. Its intrinsic value is uninvestigated, and the prejudice is felt according as the date impresses the mind. The pillar of the truth repels or attracts them, not by the inscription

but by the calendar of so recent a construction, or so continued an endurance,—from having risen so lately, or stood so long. When Bacon called "Truth the daughter of time," he was correct as to his general extent of meaning: but facts must be invariably true, however overlaid with fable and disfigured by superstition; and Christianity, emphatically the *creed of facts*, and challenging instant faith, after the lapse of centuries, has neither remitted nor increased its claim.

The *disposition* of mind, alone accordant with truth, is no where to be found in the counsel of this sage. He exhibits no love for it, nor zeal for its progress. And yet, to a properly constituted mind, truth is not less majestic and beautiful than virtue. Fair are her visions! Broad are her realms! Exhaustless are her treasures! And if we receive any dispensation of God, it must be with an esteem as well as assent—an approval proportioned to the conviction. "The love of the truth" is required that we may be "saved." Believers are, therefore, described as "rejoicing in Christ Jesus," and "always triumphing in him." Had he, whose language is now discussed, been an "Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile," other sentiments must have been delivered by him. He must not only have believed the law from the "signs in Egypt and the wonders in the field of Zoan," but have "consented to it that it was good." But is there one sentiment of a noble nature here? One sympathy with that which, if secular, should interest the reasoning, if sacred, should engross the moral, being? Truth has no charm for his subtle eye and hollow heart; he cares not how the scales may turn, so that he be not troubled to hold them; and is like a dicer throwing for others, reckless of the numbers, which cannot affect him, however they may fall!

And a false idea is supposed of the *way* or *medium* by which religious truth is received into the mind. It is argued that it must secure an entrance. A mechanical

law, a physical force, seems ascribed to it. It is forgotten that mental operations are effected in a very different manner. The avenues of the judgment are not thus to be penetrated, nor the feelings of the heart thus to be won. Air, light, and water, must have their scope; but the mind—and the mind in its fallen state—presents barriers which truth, with all its energy, cannot overthrow. It is necessary to the dignity of truth, that it should require another order of faculties beyond that eye and ear and sensible perception which are needed to admit the reality of the grossest, meanest thing. It is due to reason, with which truth coalesces, that it should not be invaded by that which is to become the aliment of thought and the incentive of action. If it were so, man would cease to be a voluntary agent, and there would be no more moral quality or accountable feature in his belief, than when he is passive in the impression of his organs. And though the direct conclusion seems not so much dependent on the will, as on the premises themselves, yet the original attention to them, the manner of regarding them step by step, are strictly responsible acts. Nor is there any complexity in these representations; for as we enforce the cultivation of health, and only intend its means, so we urge the *conviction* of the mind, when we principally desire all the preparatives for it. The "law of faith," and "the obedience of faith," necessarily imply accountability; accountability supposes volition; and these positions must endure while the letter and spirit of inspired truth correspond with each other.

Nor was this prejudice confined to him in whose proposals we now trace it. It has extended down to our times. It has received much favour from those pseudo-systems which would screen themselves under the name of philosophy. We hear that opinion is that over which man has no control. We hear of the omnipotence of truth. There is an invariable idea of force. It is to

make its way.* It is to press onward. It is likened to the surge of the flowing tide. In it is heard the tread of armies. But all these statements leave out of them "the evil heart of unbelief." Is it not certain that passion may lead different persons to the contrary interpretation of the same document, and interest, to that of the same statute? Our wish is parent to the thought, and beneath the influence of bias a change comes over us, as when the very letters of some writing wear an unnatural colour to the diseased eye.

And let them pause whose sneering indifference prompts them to say, "We shall see." The blessing of Christianity is on them "who have not seen, and yet have believed." Not that these shall be denied sensible and resistless proof. Their eye shall behold the flaming pomp of the disparted sky, and final judgment. On their ear shall ring the clangor of the last trump. They shall feel the fervent heat in which the elements dissolve. Even *their* infidelity shall be quelled. Even *their* depravity shall be incapable of throwing a dreamy incertitude over these scenes. There *can* be but one conclusion, but it comes too late!

3. The counsel which we now consider, evinces a *temper of mind most timid and cowardly.*

To some the character of this lawyer presents many attractive points. They grow ingenious in its defence. They consider him as by no means to have expressed his full convictions. They commend his prudence and debating skill in turning aside the real question. They claim indulgence for him from the exasperated state of his colleagues. They have intimated that he was a Christian at heart. To this it may be replied, that any earnestness in his speech is that of panic, any sobriety that of carelessness: that the profane comparisons of a Theudas, who "boasted himself to be somebody," with the humble Jesus who shunned them who would have "made him king,"—of

* Fit via vi.—Virg.

a Judas rebelling against "the taxing" with Him who enjoined on all to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,"—argued an ignorance of his character, and a distrust of his cause, perfectly incompatible with the faintest leaning, the most latent favour, towards him.

The simple restraint upon a persecuting spirit, which otherwise would have been let loose, is the *dread of consequences.* He may have possessed some features of superiority over his brethren: natural temperament and advancing age may have stood him in service. Yet, what is the whole address but a drivelling calculation? Remove the possibility of a recoil and a retribution, and the council would never have heard of these accommodating measures, nor received this reproof of their sanguinary intentions. Let him incur no risk, and the altar of truth may rend asunder! To set his conduct in a right point of view, we must avail ourselves of a contrast. There was brought up at the feet of this very Gamaliel, a young man of Cilicia, "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God." The proficiency of the pupil did honour to the instructor. But he could not have learnt from him any moderation but the most pusillanimous. Though he would not be taught to persecute, he would quickly see that its evil was not so much censured as its inconvenience was shunned. He would be too acute to be blinded by his master's affectation of piety, in the caveat which he pronounced concerning the danger of "fighting against God." Saul had not acquired the sycophancy of that school; he disdained artifice and compromise. So long as he continued the adversary of Christianity, he was most ingenuous. "He thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; which things he also did." He forswore parley and quarter—violent in his hostility, but undisguised. His was a fearless and unblenching course. By the influence of that grace which

he was always loudest in acknowledging, and of which the accompanying miracle was but the sign and emblem, he renounced his hatred to the Gospel, becoming its champion as resolutely as he had been its foe. We shudder while we peruse that bloody page of his story, but there is no imprint of dissimulation. The uprightness of his nature is now seen in all the intrepidity of Christian and Apostolic zeal. It is as sustained as fervid. The synagogue of Damascus first heard the voice of the convert who had approached the gates of that city with a far different commission; and the temple-porches of Jerusalem next beheld him exposed to all the contempt and malignity of the men whom he had abandoned. But he had chosen his part, his spirit rose to it, and his cry, as he rushed into the fight of the world, was this: "*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!*" When unconverted, he knew not his preceptor's misgiving; converted, he loathed his servility.—And even among his colleagues, Gamaliel might have found examples of a firmer purpose. Joseph and Nicodemus had indeed yielded for a time to an unworthy duplicity. Of one we know, and of the other we may most reasonably presume, that "he had not consented to the counsel and the deed of them," while no such exculpation can be pleaded for the man who had far greater influence than both. His voice had not been raised to save the meek Holy One whom none could "convince of sin." There seemed no danger, and therefore no impolicy, in shedding his blood. Events now wear another aspect; and only on their account would he *now* stop. But these his brethren avowed the Christian cause in its exigency, in its agony, when it vibrated between a cross and a tomb—when each look of pity, and each sigh of lamentation, were certain of notice and resentment—then the former "went in *boldly* unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus;" and the second, who "at *the first* came to Jesus by night," now assisted in giving that crucified corse its em-

balment and sepulture. Faith and love "cast out their fear."

But let us not be too sure that the conduct we reprobate is unknown among us. There are those who profess a middle course. They will not commit themselves to the Gospel; but they abstain from all direct opposition to it. It may, or it may not, be true. Leisure is not afforded them, power is not given them, to determine. At one time their tone is that of indifference, at another that of dislike; but in both cases it is chastised with an inward tremulousness. There is no decision. Yet may it easily be perceived that there is a purpose which they dare not gratify. With all their expressed complaisance and respect for it, they hardly endure it. O could the possibility of its truth be disproved—did they know that it was "of men"—how many mouths would open in scoffing and virulence against it! O what disclosures would innumerable hearts make of their enmity and perverseness! The decencies of an external respect would be withdrawn, each mask would fall, and an unmitigated depravity would be witnessed in contest with it. But if it should be true! If it be certain that he who "believeth not shall not see life!" Therefore as they cannot quite invalidate it, they will not run the hazard of its sentence, nor speak triflingly respecting its vindication. Otherwise ridicule would soon have shot all its shafts, envy expended all its poisons, and hatred mustered all its onsets! They cannot dare the persecutor's fate, lest the Gospel be true; they cannot welcome the christian's self-denial, lest it be false! It is the stronger side they seek, and about which they only care. However that may be, they exercise no impartiality in the determination. The love of sin makes them disbelieve, and the fear of punishment only induces them in that disbelief to waver. Their forbearance is policy, their hostility is disposition.

Hitherto we have examined the views and reasonings

of this Jewish civilian, in their general form and influence: but there may be a particular truth and justice in them, when they are tried by specific circumstances, without redeeming his motive, or justifying his intention, in their use.

II. LET US PROCEED TO INQUIRE INTO THE TESTIMONY OF FACT, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF HISTORY, AS TO THE APPLICATION OF THESE ARGUMENTATIVE PRINCIPLES IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE.

Success and perpetuity are not the necessary tests of truth. These have often been boasted and pleaded by falsehood. Many gross delusions have extended as rapidly, and endured as permanently, as Christianity. Indeed, an argument drawn from the continuance of a religion, is untenable and self-destructive. For it may, after all, be subverted. To rest our faith on such a proof, is really to suspend it on what time may cast down: for anything that can be shown to the contrary, religions may succeed each other in an indefinite series.

And the argument is not redeemed by an appeal to Divine interposition. Most truly this "teacher of the law" expresses a portion of confidence that God would so undertake for truth as to identify himself with it, and to render opposition to it a "fighting against" himself. But it must be remembered, that its evidence of divinity is necessarily confined to the introductory stage, and that further extraordinary tokens than are necessary to authenticate that fact would be incompatible with our rational nature and moral treatment. He was contemporary with the only manifestations of omnipotence of which a religion, spiritual and credible, can admit, and for which they could be beneficial!

But when the nature of the Gospel is examined, it will not be difficult to exhibit it with most happy advantage, by the lights we borrow from reasonings unworthy in their original motive, and unjust in their common reference. Its peculiarity will justify the application.

What cause has been met with such unsparing contempt, and pursued with such implacable rancour? The "holy child Jesus" was refused even the stable's shelter, and the manger's rest; and driven into a distant land. His course was prefigured in these early indignities—contumely refrained not from "shame and spitting"—and all was consummated by a cross. Accordingly, his Gospel had an origin, if human estimates be consulted, the most unpropitious. It possessed not patronage, wealth, power; it had no lure to popularity, no passport to fame. It knew its own repulsiveness, but sought not to lessen the "stumbling-block," or to extenuate the "foolishness." Concealment was not thrown over a feature of its aspect, apology was not heard in a tone of its appeal. Nothing in appearance, nothing in pretension, conld be more perplexing to the sense, more repugnant to the taste, of mankind.—Its *doctrines* put man into the relationship of a guilty rebellious creature, and told him of a pardon through a medium which more revolted him than the sentence it remitted, of a repentance in a connection which only fomented the depravity it should have bewailed.—Its *lessons* were as strange: the classic virtues were proscribed, and the admiration which had hitherto descended upon them, was turned into all the contempt which its kind genius can know. It substituted whatever men had scorned for whatever men had worshipped, of their loathings excited their aspirations, and inculcated sensibility in the place of stoicism, humility in that of haughtiness, meekness in that of revenge.—Its *advocates* had not a worldly polish to captivate, or a scholastic erudition to convince. Their enemies "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men."—What reasonable hope could be entertained that a religion, so beset with difficulties, so disfavoured by circumstances, so singular in principles, should prevail?

The history, is, however, incontestible. Christianity

did spread itself over the inhabited world. The second century had not closed ere it was wrought into the temper of the times, as well as diffused through the mass of the nations. It has left monuments and traditions where it is now unknown. Its enemies have written its triumphs. They were too notorious for the historian to omit them, and too interesting to remain untold by the correspondent. Could the more local and uncourtly narratives and epistles of the first ages be recovered, what an assemblage would they form of pagan surmise and consternation. What disheartenings would have been discovered in the camp, had some Christian hero entered it, and heard each "man tell his dream unto his fellow." Christian apologists alleged as much: pitied the sculptors of unsaleable gods, and the priests of deserted temples. Now *its* progress and *its* durability do convince us

1. That it is "*a counsel and work of God.*"

Its distinctive character is derived from a crucifixion. That mode of death was a proverbial execration. It was, in the present case, made most ignominious. A seditious murderer was preferred to the Sufferer, and thieves were put to death on either side. No insult was spared. He was scourged, He was derided, He was outraged—He sank beneath his cross: contrary to custom, his body was torn open by a lance; and the reason why it was not left on its gibbet to blacken in the sun and to wither in the storm, was a notion which connected with it uncleanness.—Nor was this distinctive character at any time the subject of compromise. There was no attempt to extenuate a single part of it. The cross—long before warriors had made it the pretext of slaughter, and bigots the idol of superstition,—formed the ensign of a bloodless victory, and the badge of a votive dedication. Could this stigma have been concealed, the name of Jesus might have been applauded in the Capitol, and his image have filled a niche of the Pantheon. But this was resounded, this was particular-

ized, this was entoned, in every discourse, in every narrative, in every song. "My love is crucified!" was the rallying cry; and with it the martyrs awaited the spring of the brinded monster, and saw curling around them the devouring flame. They "gloried in the cross."

It must be remembered that Christianity resorted to no subterfuge. It sought no distant realm, it reserved itself for no less inquisitive time. It asked its trial in the scene of those events of which it is but the interpretation, and claimed it at the very crisis when all was recent and to be easily decided. Close by the "place of skulls," at the mouth of the "new tomb in which never man was laid" until the remains of its Founder were deposited in it, it demanded the investigation. How unlike fraud! How removed from chicane! Nor was it a barbarous age; but one of professed candour, of indisputable acuteness, of characteristic refinement, of deep discourse. And the manner of the Apostles was that of perfect ingenuousness. They did not cautiously break the intelligence. There was no policy in the slowness of communication. Nothing could exceed the distinctness, the nakedness, of their disclosures. The "offence of the cross" was given a designed prominence, and not veiled with a prudential disguise.

It was indebted to no common aids of popularity. Instead of being associated with *patriotism*, it was denounced as an anti-national parricide. Instead of lending itself to the indulgence of *sensuality*, and seeking the favour of the voluptary, it binds all its followers to a perpetual self-denial. Instead of courting *civil protection*, and much less *alliance*,—though truly the best guides to governments, and the surest defence of states—it was the victim of their unrelenting hostility. Persecution was indeed a novelty in that era. Though it had always been directed against the adherents and principles of the True Revelation, yet among the "heathen who now raged" it was

generally unpractised. Their intercommunity of deities counteracted it. As the tutelary was restricted to a certain space and people, the traveller had to avail himself of the genius presiding over each strange land. But Christianity was exclusive. It had no sanction for rival claims. It followed the language of its God: "Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any." And what a burst of fury had it to engage! Cruelty had never devised, until now, a moiety of its tortures. It became fertile of invention. It wound still hardier nerve about its heart. The beast of the amphitheatre seemed to learn its new lesson, and fire acquired a power of more lingering torture. Yet, the Church was not left a waste. It grew like the grass beneath the scythe. It multiplied in the proportion of its devastation, wrought success from disaster, and found gain in loss.—A few remarks will complete the argument we wish to establish: That the progress of *such* a religion, and in *such* circumstances, proves it to be divine. Now, *first,* Christianity must necessarily be a widely and rapidly extending cause. It was not enough that it had capabilities for extension; it was indispensable that it should be extended in *fact.* For this was what the Jewish prophets foretold when every prejudice confined revelation within the borders of their land; and it was frequently and variously announced by Christ, when all probability forbad the hope that, after a few years, his name should even be remembered. So that if the Gospel did not swiftly advance and generally prevail, it would have been deficient in a particular branch of evidence requisite to authenticate it. For either then the predictions were false, or it was not the system intended by them. And, *secondly*, the progress of such a religion is but the effect of the *continually repeated evidence* involved in its *earliest stage.* We believe at the distance of so many ages, because contemporaries of its orgin believed, because they could not have believed un-

less they were rationally convinced, because they could not be rationally convinced unless they had adequate means and worthy grounds of conviction, because those means must have been irrefutable, or they would not have incurred martyrdom in yielding to them. Its beginning explains its progress, far more than its progress ratifies its beginning. How was it able to continue but from the proofs which gathered around its commencement? How could it be suffered to pursue its course, but from the perfect equipment of its outset? Therefore thus stands the case. Christianity, without an earthly recommendation and aid, in resistance to interests and powers the most formidable, spread itself over the globe. Its success is attributable to miracle, or it is not. If you concede the affirmative, the debate has ceased; for operations of divine power can never be put forth to abet falsehood: if you deny the intervention of miracle, than the fact of the progress made by the Christian religion, considered in itself and in reference to its difficulties, is an inversion of experience, a transformation of motive—a contradiction in the application of principles, an anomaly in the agency of causes—forming altogether a greater system of prodigies than all the miracles of Scripture suppose. Only this choice is left in the dilemma—whether we will call in the explicit principle of miracle, or imagine a chain of extravagancies in the place of its lucid consistency.

2. Opposition to the Gospel has always borne the mark of "fighting against God."

Certain principles of a natural theology may be recognized, by comparing the common course of events with the established modes of thinking and impression, by looking into the works of God and the consciences of his accountable creatures. We arrive at authorized conclusions. The elements of justice and benevolence are the subjects of clear discovery and immutable obligation. Order and

harmony are ascertained to be as beautiful in mental structure and moral conduct as in the material universe. Law is felt to be not less indispensable in the regulation of our ideas and passions, than in the great binding and mobile forces of our planet, and of the firmament in which it rolls. As these are the constitutions of our Maker, we may be assured that nothing of disagreement with them, nothing of violence to them, can be pleasing to his nature, or concurrent with his will. He has given us the faculty to perceive, and the sympathy to approve, them; has placed in our minds the mirror which reflects these external manifestations. These moral rudiments conduct us to "the invisible things" of Jehovah—the moral properties of his being. But it is Christianity which gives to these views their truest precision. Without it they are very general and inefficient, though sufficiently conspicuous and fixed to leave us "without excuse." We learn from it that the First cause is Infinite Excellence, "glorious in holiness!" It renders its devoutest homage to his *moral character*. It declares this to be the basis of all divine and human relations. "It is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." Now, it is most observable that the enemies of the Gospel have always professed their dislike to these representations. They have felt that their best hope of undermining it, was to reject them. Each step they took towards the subversion of this religion was upon the destruction of these primary sentiments. They disturbed all the foundations of peace and equity. To act their part, it was necessary to efface the impress of these principles from the minds of men; and equally to deny the existence of their prototypes in the Deity. And was that a career which He could approve? Could He have so entangled these precious interests of individual, social, and moral man, with error, that in its overthrow all must perish together? Could He look complacently on opposition to any speculation at the certain sacrifice of all these

bonds between earth and heaven? In the school of infidelity there is nothing that allows virtue—it is a prejudice! nothing that respects obligation — it is an expedient! nothing that honours man—he is a machine! nothing that worships God—he is a blind impulse! "It fights against God" in "taking pleasure in unrighteousness"—in its infringement of authority, its scorn of decency, its jarring of order, its love of confusion, its licence of blasphemy, its encouragement of libertinism, its relish of blood: and most effectually it makes war against Him by trampling under foot that "wisdom which is from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." So that in a most serious sense we may add: "He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."

They who admit that there is a God, cannot altogether exclude him from the government of the world. However they may attempt to hamper this government by fatalizing causes and general laws, something of a directing mind and conscious volition must be introduced into its administration. As events are not indifferent to any mind and will, so they cannot be to the view of the Eternal: and it is impossible to conceive that he takes an interest in events which he has no power to subordinate and control. He watches not from his throne the stream of a necessarian tendency—He sitteth upon the flood, He is "mightier than the mighty waves." How can the sceptic boast that any portion of favour has been granted to his cause? Can he but confess that the universal course of things has withstood it? If Providence has a design, can he claim its sympathy and coincidence? Has not the elation of infidelity been brief, and the triumph of Christianity lasting? Has a vicissitude affected the religion of the Bible, which it did not engrave among its prophecies? Is not this the difference between the two,

that the one looks for its promulgation to some uncertain chance; and that the other, with a sublime repose, knows that it is the care and trust of an Almighty superintendence and purpose? Let the opponent show where his infidelity falls in with these; when it has ever seemed the "counsel and the work of God," favourable to the tenor of divine government, and taking its rank in the scheme of divine decretion—and then, and not until then, can we excuse it from "fighting against God?"—"*They know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.*"

Arguing from the most general conceptions of the Creator, we should confide in his design to make his creatures good and happy. His "tender mercies are over all his works." In the care of rational creatures, He adjusts a proportion between conduct, and emotions of pleasure and pain. It is, therefore, our well-being He seeks, that is, our happiness in a particular state of mind and behaviour. Benevolence, pursuing morality as its means, is consequently most godlike. But what is the predicament of all contest with Christianity? Is not the attempt pernicious? Does it promote amity? Does it breathe peace? Does it impart consolation? Does it light up smiles? Does it wipe away tears? Is it calculated to yield the mind a satisfaction? Has it been known to give the heart a relief? Can it be in accordance with a Divine "lovingkindness and tender mercy" to present to man the grave as his only shelter, and utter annihilation as his only hope? Is not this to "fight against God," who is "full of compassion," "who comforteth us in all our tribulations?"

It might be imagined, at least, that they who trifle with our faith and strike against our profession, would be influenced by philanthropic feelings. If they deride us and torture us, it will only be a severely curative process. They must awake us by violent disturbance, by the thun-

der of their knocking. Now, in contradistinction, we demand, have they a reasonable—to say nothing of a benevolent—determination? What do they propose? Safety is no question between us. Happiness is not mingled in the proffered cup. If they would make us more rational, they mean to allow our animal part a more lawless indulgence. If they paint the vision of a perfectibility, they intend a disorganized community, and a dissocialized individual. They have no ambition to make man less the brute. They labour not to enlarge or brighten his horizon. They arouse him with no appeal of immortality. They infallibly sink, degrade, embitter, mock him! Why do they propagate notions so chill, so contracting, so mortifying? Have they any thing to give in exchange "for a peace which passeth all understanding?" for "joy unspeakable and full of glory?" for a "conversation in heaven?" *It is thus they ease their pain, thus they reinforce their courage.* The plague-stricken has loved to hear the shriek of the sufferer at his side! He who walks in the dark fears to walk alone!

The bane of infidelity, even as a means of exempting men from the fears of religion, is its inability to give any *certainty*, and to inspire any *assurance*. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge." It is descriptive of the Gospel, that its spirit is not that "of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It overcomes the sense of guilt, and the dread of death. There never was the tumult of grief it could not allay. To sinking mortality it can lend the bearing of victory, turn its tear into a triumph, and its sob into a song. Unbelief, *if* it could disprove our religion, never could *certify its own*. It is a system of misgivings. Take your station by the death-bed of which it is not quite ashamed. Listen to some hollow buffoonery, or some constrained bravado. Go not to its common scene of frantic agony and despair. Seek what is more

staid and unshrinking. Is this the spirit's befitting passage, if an eternity should be before it? Is seriousness incompatible with such an experiment? Is not the effort of gaiety misplaced? Are we illiberal when we urge this failure of all support and holy placidity in dissolution? Can we but feel the contrast which our faith exhibits while—diverting no attention from the pain, and benumbing no sensibility to the awfulness, of the approaching change of worlds—it breathes a balm which no struggle can dissipate, and confers a dignity which none of the ghastly accidents of death—the shroud, the bier, the grave, the corruption, the reptile—can for a moment disturb? It is the religion of the dying? "Death is ours!" That which some make their taunt, we feel our glory. Infidelity here cannot prefer a claim. It has nothing for its unhappy votaries, to confirm and soothe, in the awaited extremity. And the curse of a thousand breaking, broken, hearts, is its well merited reward! "Had I not been by," said Condorcet of the expiring D'Alembert, "he would have flinched too."—Combining, then, all that we know of God, he is light, truth, and goodness. If the gospel be deceit, under his government *deceit*, without any hold of fact and motive of kindness, is the only instrument of amelioration and felicity! If infidelity be well-founded—a ray of divine light, a member of divine truth, an emanation of divine goodness—then, under the same government, it is the instrument of disorder and profanity, lust and blood—the parent of every crime, and the source of every woe! Remember that it disparages and blots out the moral image of the Deity, that it evidently forms no part in the scheme of Providence, that it has no congruity with human happiness, that it can find no justification in its motives or effects for any attempt to propagate itself, that a shaking broken reed only can represent its tremulous unsustaining vanities: remember that these are the very opposites to

Christianity—the foils to its excellence, and the contrasts to its power—and then judge ye, whether they who abet the former, can have any thing in common with the character and design of God, whether they who oppose the latter, must not be found "fighting against Him?"

3. The Gospel, being the "counsel and work of God," and being such that none can oppose it without "fighting against him," it follows that it "cannot be overthrown."

The Divine Being must not only always favour truth, and frown on error and falsehood, but when He has founded a moral dispensation, He will enforce it. These interests may not be visited with his sensible favour and displacency in individuals; and even He may sometimes suffer a dispensation to be greatly affected by the hostile passions of men. "Truth has fallen in the street." But it is inconceivable, as it would be inconsistent, that He should neglect and abandon it. He has never propounded a law without the intention and means of enforcing it; and a scheme of religion, the most perfect as being the last, cannot, therefore, but be maintained by Him. He will "plead his own cause." His wisdom in its "counsel" must be vindicated. His power in its "work" must be signalized. All things will be rendered tributary and subservient. As Jehovah liveth he must do this. His enemies must be his footstool. Every arrangement, every event, must hasten to the result of a final ascendency and triumph on the part of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." For that end, He will withhold no *evidence* necessary for its confirmation. *Providential succour* shall be granted, at proper intervals, in a manner which only perverseness can mistake. The "cause of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, girds the sword upon the thigh of the Most Mighty, and buckles on his bright and refulgent armour." Long since He has espoused it as his own. For this He shed his blood. For this He shone with his rising glory. For this He was installed on the throne of

the universe. For this He wields all power in heaven and earth. Apparently slighted, tottering, perishing, the subject of this trust never waned in his memory, nor languished in his heart. Nor shall it cease to grow, nor fail to surround itself with accumulating strength and splendour. Like the daughter of Zion, Christianity can now "shake her hand" at her enemies. And soon she shall resemble "the great wonder in heaven"—the apocalyptic woman who had the sun for her robe, the moon for her footstool, and constellations for her crown! What is resistance offered to such a Cause of such a Being? What are confederated powers? "He who sitteth in the heavens shall laugh!" "He shall despise their image!" "Yea, He shall send out his arrows and scatter them: He shall shoot out lightnings and discomfort them." Is it his "counsel?" Hear him!—"My counsel shall stand." Is it his "work." Hear him!—"I will work, and who shall let it?" Do they, who oppose these, "fight against him?" Hear him!—"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." Our confidence thus lays hold of infallible pledges. "Our Gospel" is irreversible as divine intention, indestructible as divine operation, secure as divine victory. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in *counsel*, and excellent in *working*.

No other source of evidence can strengthen these convictions. They may be varied, however, by a reference to the history of Christianity. The past is an answer to fear. What has it not withstood? Manners, long since refined, must again become barbarous—nations, now civilized, must fall back into a savage state—maxims, exploded by common consent, must revive, ere it can be threatened with its ancient wrongs. It endured, it braved, it baffled them all. And it still towers high and stands firm—as the promontory-rock, beaten into solidity, and swelled into grandeur, by the tempests which rage, and the waves which boil, around it!

Gamaliel reasoned most falsely as to the test and tendency of truth; and yet he urged, however blindly and unsuspectingly, much that the believer in the Gospel may apply. And by extending some of his statements and transposing others, we can construct a moral demonstration of its truth, and draw a lively picture of its excellence.

III. LET US NOW SELECT THOSE DISTINCTIVE SENTIMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY WHICH WOULD HAVE PREVENTED THE FALLACIES OF SUCH REASONING, AND STILL ENABLE US TO CORRECT ITS ERRORS AND SUPPLY ITS DEFECTS.

The ignorance which the whole argument of the text not so much betrays as boasts concerning the *nature* of that system which Christ and his Apostles preached, is most inexcusable. Was the mind of this renowned scholar so occupied with the subtilties of his lore that it might not unbend to a theme like this? Was it not a requirement of his station to defend and direct the popular opinion? Was he not, by virtue of his office, "a guide of the blind, and an instructor of the foolish?" If what purports to be a Divine revelation has no external evidence, no decisive proof, that Omnipotence is moving in its favour,—perhaps a neglect of its inspection would be justified. But when eclipse, contrary to all material law, mourned this Founder's death; when earthquake shook the house in which his disciples were assembled as the loud answer to their prayer; when tongues, ill-trained to their own language, burst into every speech of earth; when, at a word, the living died, and the dead lived; when the prison rent of its own accord and refused to hold in its gloomy confinement the persecuted disciple, as the grave had no power to retain his crucified Lord; then at least there was incentive to curiosity, and ground for enquiry; there was something to rival the glories of the Jewish Church. The healed cripple, whom John and Peter brought with them before the council, was the

object of universal notoriety. The council had met most numerously, "rulers, elders, and scribes, the high priest," with all his sacerdotal kindred. There was no misapprehension of the character of the cited parties,—the judges "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." And what was the conclusion to which they were compelled to yield? "That a *notable miracle* has been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and *we cannot deny it.*" After this, where appears the liberality, the candour, the ingenuousness of Gamaliel? Some time, perhaps a year, intervened between this admission and this advice. That interval was filled up with the most public and decisive miracles. And yet he evidently remained careless and uninformed as at the first, respecting this religion, of which unparalleled signs from heaven had taken the charge and published the sanction!

Examining the contents of the Christian religion, this leader of the Sanhedrim would have found in it averments far different from his crude notions; *nothing that might justify delay in acknowledging its veracity,—nothing that could leave its glorious futurity uncertain,—nothing that made it doubtful whether God would interpose for it,—nothing that entitled men to take a negative and neutral position towards it.* These are the corrections which the Gospel suggests: let us review them in order.

1. The credibility of this religion is at any given time capable of being brought to issue.

A two-fold objection is raised to the reasonableness of this *immediate* claim on the questions of *space* and *time.* The *former* may be thus represented: The Gospel is the "common salvation" of men, without national exception and restriction,—it is to be "made known unto all,"—how is it that it covers so few countries, and is believed by so few peoples? Let it, indeed, become universal, and we will embrace it. The *latter* may assume this form: In the vicissitude and flux of mortal things, there is a constant

succession of opinions—evidence is counteracted by further evidence, and speculation swallows up speculation: we smile at the dotage of our fathers, and may be ourselves pitied by our children. Let us know the ultimatum, and then comparing all, we can decide between them.—These objections may be met in two ways. We can show that they never can be *applicable* to a moral revelation,—since they may overlook whole kingdoms, and exclude whole ages. It might so be that the conversion of the world is reserved to crown the closing years of time. Conviction is thus suspended upon what countless generations and human varieties can never behold. And this is confirmed by the present date of the objection; it is adduced after eighteen centuries. As it allows that Christianity may be true if ever it accumulate the evidence of catholicity and perpetuity—and on that evidence ought to be believed—so it admits that it may have *all this time been true*, and yet that man was *justified in disbelieving it!* And the prophetic Scriptures do most plainly express that it is in the *latter* days that "all nations shall flow together to the mountain of Jehovah's house;" that the *seventh* angel must sound ere "the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Besides, these objections *vitiate themselves.* For if any one has a right to withhold his belief in Christianity until all others profess it, all others must have the same right; and that right being asserted, it is obvious that all must abandon themselves to absolute infidelity. And the reservation of belief on the condition, or in the suspense, of a future religion, is equally contradictory and self-destructive. For unless each individual of the species knew himself of the last generation, and the last of that generation, he would be reluctant to certify, and tempted to doubt,—and be only capable of reaching his final decision, when all probation shall cease, and all conviction be an act of sense and not of mind,—when "there shall be time no longer!"

Our religion is more reasonable. It has addressed every man, whom it found, from the first moment of its mission. Its evidence was always sufficient. It can always assign, what it requires all its disciples to be ready to give, "a reason of its hope." It never rolled out a credential that was defective, nor wore a character which was immature. It came forth with its full perfection. "Beginning at Jerusalem," it showed its fearlessness of refutation. It called all men to believe and repent. It declined no answer, it postponed no investigation; it has always said, To-day if ye will hear *my* voice. As salvation is a personal business, so it must be accomplished in our term of life. We have nothing to do with number and duration. We are to believe for ourselves, though not a contemporary gave us his fellowship, though not a descendant followed our example. "It is from faith to faith;" its own independent credibility elicits and warrants all our powers of confidence.

A momentary exchange, by imagination, of the era and circumstance falling to different persons of our species, will tend to prove,—that infidelity has always its pretext, that parties who envy each other may equally repine, and that it is the actual truth of Christianity, as *always* open to inquiry and worthy of acceptance, which holds the steady balance between them. Gamaliel, if sincere, thought that a flight of ages might satisfy all doubt, that they who should be born far onward in the history of the world must attain a settled judgment, and, perhaps glancing to *our* times, sighed for a birthright in them. *Then*, it might occur to him, would be a favoured opportunity of deliberating on the problem: *then*, he might suppose, all would be decided by the mere force of events: and *then*, likewise, might seem to dawn before him a day of calm and lustre, unobscured by the passions of violence and strife. Too old and selfish to risk any thing, some vision of our epoch might play upon his

fancy; and under its influence he might see his own form depicted among the magic creations—his youth renewed with the transfer of his lot. He might even rouse himself to think, that were it real, he would have been faithful among the faithless, and *could* only have pursued a resolute conduct. And if he felt a passing shame, he would point to "the times that went over him and over Israel," blame his destiny, and bewail his misfortune. But are there none of our age who affect to seek the reverse? Backward they throw an "evil eye." They regret, for all the purposes of belief, that they should live in a country and period so remote from whatever belonged to early Christianity. O could they have traversed the haunts of the first believers; mused in Gethsemane while the ground yet retained the pressure and stain of the Saviour when he agonized there; knelt on Calvary where he fainted, and kissed the blood-spots of his cross; felt the rocking of "the upper-chamber" at Pentecost, and seen the cloven tongues; followed the disciples to "their own company," and "broken bread with them from house to house;" beheld the leaping lame, and the risen dead! O could they have been of Gamaliel's generation, they might have accomplished all; had they enjoyed his length of life, all this history would have been included in it; had they possessed his influence of station, they might have commanded access to every detail of fact and branch of evidence! How easy would it then have been to believe! The deeds were recent, the witnesses were at hand!—And thus behold "the contradiction of sinners!" Some desire a later, others an earlier scene, of time: some speak of the same substantive proof as if it could be affected by its novelty, others as though it could be enfeebled by its antiquity: all coincide in their contemptuous treatment of the only view of truth, and share of evidence, which, in the nature of things, they can receive. No transition of times, no

variation of circumstances, could alter the temper or impress the sensibility of the heart, which at any one stage of Christian history, confesses its unconquerableness of doubt, and its impotence of conviction.

2. Christianity is itself a prediction of its own success. The numerous speculations of men have been forgotten, or retained, not always according to their merits. And this, probably, was the most enlarged consideration which the adviser of his brethren now allowed. Here was ushered on the stage of public notice a class of sentiments into which he had not looked. Such a scheme might or might not succeed. But it was submitted to the eyes of enemies as well as friends; and it ought to have been tried by justice and not thrown to chance. How knew he but that the seeds of mischief, disorder, and impiety, were lodged in it? If moral, as well as sensible, evidence crushed the suspicion, was it not a presumption that it contained a treasure that would repay the gaze and the acquisition? There are inventions, maxims, rules of life, means of happiness, which we are assured will last as long as earth and man. They are built on experience. They are related to utility. They bind up with them our best interests and hopes. And so, independently of other tests, we examine the principle, the bosom-genius, of Christianity. We know what "glorious things" seers have beheld, and prophets have sung, concerning it: we know how the inspired mantle still waves around its form, and how the heaven-strung harp preludes its course. We see it "coming in the clouds of the prophetic heaven." But had a prediction never intimated its success, we might have forestalled that such was its right and determination. He who discovered and established it, most evidently intended it to engross the world. He could not, with any consistency or truth, displace it by another dispensation. It is jealous of any rivalry, and avows its purpose of suppres-

sion. Its *truth* renders all other pretensions false; its *fitness* proves all other contrivances inapplicable; its *authority* stamps all other interferences treasonous; its *grace* declares all other remedies ineffectual; its *universality* presupposes all other expedients superfluous; its *perpetuity* makes all other chances hopeless; its *unearthliness* exhibits all other projects gross and mean. Some religions have disclaimed a long duration: others have avowed that they were unfitted for an extended scale. Far different is the announcement of Christianity. Far different is its expansive and immortal principle. Shall *it* be cramped with local shackles, or circumscribed within narrow limitations? Shall the chariots of salvation, whose speed can overtake the sin and sorrow of the world, run the little circles of a tiresome repetition, and not sweep valley after valley, and vault from hill to hill? Shall the wings of mercy, strong for a flight from one end of heaven to another, but flutter across a little country, and brood over an insignificant land? Is it a short-lived discovery? Cannot it claim a property in the deepest future? If this be not its design and scope, if it be not the religion for the whole earth, if it be not in force through all time, then it is at variance with itself. There would be a disparity between its aim and success, a struggle between its aspirations and capabilities. But such a religion may be believed. None can misapprehend its intention. Its own mouth pronounces this oracle! Its own bosom heaves with this ambition! This pledge flashes from its brow! This reward fixes its eye! This goal draws its step! It moves among the nations as something dedicated to greatness! It knows that it is the light of the world. It knows that it shall inherit "the ages to come." Confident in its career and consummation, as in its origin and motive—conscious what it shall be as well as is—it flies upon the spoil before it begins the battle, and predestines the prize ere it girds for the race.

But the worthiness of a religion may be greater than its influence; moral truth may perish in the earth: and Christianity, left to itself, must have shared that fate. We, therefore, proceed to remark,

3. That it is connected with an efficient and appropriate divine agency.

The presumption must always be that God would undertake for his own cause. That interposition might be various. It might be restricted to defence and restraint. It might be employed to assuage the hostility of men, to shorten the arm of oppression, to combine circumstances and events in a favourable manner. But that would leave the evidences and doctrines of such a cause to their own unaided operation. And if they resembled those of Christianity, perfect as they are, they must fail of successful impression. Nothing could make them more cogent and distinct—it is a *subjective* difficulty. The sun may shine, and is not to be censured because the blind do not see. And so it is that this religion, from the beginning, gave the promise of an accompanying power,—upon the exercise of that power rested entirely for success,—and only spoke of the Spirit of Christ less emphatically than of Christ himself. That an *external* enforcement should follow a "work and counsel of God," was an idea that could occur to Gamaliel. But it is the beautiful originality, the peculiar conception, of our faith, that an *immediate* power is put forth on the *soul*, ensuring its success. The Gospel already exists in its perfect truth and reason; nor can any higher quality of intelligence and fitness be superadded to it. But it is not *perceived* nor *appreciated*. "The light shineth in darkness." This power, operating within, convinces us of that guilty state and irreligious disposition under which we labour, and on account of which we need evangelical reconciliation. It assumes forms, and takes directions, most accurately adapted to our intellectual and moral faculties, and quite

sufficient to prove that it descends from Him "who searcheth all things." It not only respects the human mind in all its springs and secrets, but in all its processes harmonizes most exactly with the principles of Christianity. It is the witness to its truth, the seal to its authority, the earnest of its blessedness. It spreads like attraction through the consciousness, breaks like light upon the understanding, and distils like dew over the heart. It brings the Gospel into perpetual contact with man, "makes him willing," "transforms him in the renewing of the mind," and "brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." This, this, ensures the "counsel and work of God:" this precludes that it "shall come to nought." "It is the ministration of the Spirit." And so it receives a *perpetual sanction;* and draws out a train, along all its march, of *moral evidence and illustration.* Prejudice is turned to admiration, and enmity to love. It is hidden as an operation, it is ostensible in its effect. No contingency can render it uncertain whether the Gospel shall "return void." It shall be allowed, it shall be realized, it shall be eternally celebrated, by a "great number which no man can number." This influence is not, however, necessary to moral government, and human accountability. And yet it is so abundantly promised, and is attainable by so certain a course, that they, "not having the Spirit," are as destitute of present excuse as of original claim. Nor let any conceive that the invariable thought and condescension of the Deity, in this influence, is what he will reject as unworthy of him. He assimilates it to the honours of his highest work; compares it with his noblest manifestation of power; "For God, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,* hath shined *in our hearts,* to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Had the Gospel been perused by this dastard senator,

he must have noticed that it made no allowance for demur and hesitation; that it regarded with no favour those who stood coldly by to see the issue; that it indulged no complacency in them who sought credit on the supposition of their neutrality:

4. It demands a positive character of decision in all whom it recognizes as its followers.

It is strange that men can claim merit in what is simply negative, and imagine that they do a good work by a course of indifference. Thousands, who boast their freedom from bigotry and their abhorrence of persecution, will urge as its ground their general toleration. They suffer others to think! They never interfere with private opinion! But where is the liberality of the sufferance, when we remember the atrocity of the resistance? Vain man! What is thy grace in forbearing to intrude on a province which thou canst never touch? or if thou couldst, it were a sacrilegious violation?—And, in the same manner, thousands express a self-gratulation that they never attacked Christianity with obloquy, nor injured the interests of its disciples. They speak of their enlightened policy in "refraining from these men, and letting them alone." But be it remembered that the very terms savour of an armistice; and that there can be no indulgence in relaxing what there is no right to inflict.—Another view now unfolds upon us. The praise of this toleration between man and man we spurn. What new features of impiety does it disclose when its idea is transferred to "the counsel and work" of the Deity! It proclaims not open war with heaven! It does not take up arms against it! And what if it did? Could it fear the assault? But this is too fearful. And, therefore, men will leave the struggle between truth and error, righteousness and sin, to itself, or to other combatants; and though they take no part, they stand ready to grasp the honours of the victory. But far different is the language of Christianity.

It rejects all compromise, it disavows all equivocation. It neither reserves to its professors the choice of ease, or the preservation of fame, or the refusal of death. It requires a devotion so complete, that in comparison and competition with it, we must "hate father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and life also, or we cannot be its disciples." It had now spoken with its energy of decision to Gamaliel as it had erst to Matthew: "Follow me." The publican left the receipt of custom, and the higher functionary should have descended from his judgment seat. If he understood the claim, he prevaricated with it; declined to assist what he forebore to oppose; and received the indignant answer and the just retribution which it ever hurls against the time-server and time-waiter—alike against the false friend and specious foe,—"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad!"

Brethren,—It is temerity, it is phrenzy, to "fight against God." It is not the brand and the sword of the persecutor which are necessary to do this. It may be effected by any opposition, however secret, to the mercy, the authority, and purity of the Gospel! But other things are expected of us. An awful warfare is now in progress around us. "Without are fightings" in which *we* must close. "The good soldier of Jesus Christ" must not shrink. We "war not after the flesh." And it is he only who "has come to the help of the Lord," who has joined in the glorious strife, that in his death-fall can exclaim, "I have fought the good fight,"—that can enter upon the rewards which are promised to "him that overcometh." These are not days for repose and voluptuousness. "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents." The battle cry is on the wind! It is time for the host to show itself with banner and trumpet! Let its ranks be serried, its ensigns dispread, its onsets resistless! Take the whole armour of God! Quit you like men! Heaven

opens amidst the waving of palms and the chorus of harps; and, rushing from the portal, is seen the white horse with Him that sitteth upon it—diadems are on his head, armies in his train,—He wears not so much the munitions of the Chief as the trappings of the Victor,—and in "righteousness He doth judge and make war!" Are we loyal to his cause? Are we fearless in our avowal? Are we "in nothing terrified by our adversaries?" Short shall be the contest, we cannot fail of success; we shall hang high our trophies on the pillars of immortality?

"Who is on the Lord's side?"

SERMON III.

MORAL MEANS PREFERABLE TO MIRACLE.

LUKE xvi. 31.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, IF THEY HEAR NOT MOSES AND THE PROPHETS, NEITHER WILL THEY BE PERSUADED, THOUGH ONE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

IT has been common for men in every age, and seems consonant with their very nature, to "require a sign." No "generation" is entitled to the guilty distinction of being "evil and sensual," because it "seeketh after" this kind of appeal. A preternatural display in favour and enforcement of Revelation, is a desirable and necessary thing. It *may* be that the demand is rather the resort of evasion than the measure of cautious research. It is certain that in the recurrence and continuity of the challenge there *is* sin. The temper and the occasion are possibly indicative of hypocritical pretence and wilful unbelief. But there *was* a time when to insist upon miracle was most rational and laudable: "What dost thou work?" We ought to ascertain whether it is our Creator who speaks. There ought to be proof of his direct purpose and agency. No religion can be true and incumbent but that which He ordains: and He can ordain none which shall not bear satisfactory impressions of a divine origin. He must communicate his will by a regular or arrested course of things. If in the former manner, there

is no notice, no warning, no absolute evidence: if by the latter way, it is His "coming forth out of His place," and the argument is decisive. But this is not a *higher* exercise of His power, it is only a *particular*. That which can impel the operations of nature must needs be able to suspend them; or they have in the mean time become independent of their primary cause, and exceed its control. A miracle is a voluntary departure from the system established in the universe: it can only be voluntary in relation to the divine mind, which established it, operating on its laws. If it be wrought in confirmation of a religion, that religion is henceforth propounded as *divine*. Unless it obtain this character of *authority*, it is impossible to commend it to man by its *wisdom*, or any other qualities of *excellence*. Nor is it conceivable in what manner the Deity could declare it to be his disclosure and dispensation, did He not thus dreadly break the silence, and interrupt the uniformity, of the movements He originally imparted to his works. As these are but his *constant* volitions and processes, when altered and diverted, God is seen to interpose: and the cause, whatever it be, subjected to justify the singularity, and to receive the sanction, of the procedure, cannot but be pre-eminently and declaratively His!*

This method and rule of evidence is adopted most professedly by every economy of inspired truth. We are only commanded to believe on the ground of its producing miraculous proof. All is suspended—its credibility of character, our duty of assent—on the competency and readiness discovered to furnish this ultimate satisfaction. Under the old law we find this species of attestation proclaimed: "Behold I make a covenant: before all thy peo-

* "Likewise, that whensoever God doth transcend the law of nature by miracles, which may ever seem as new creations, he never cometh to that point or pass, but in regard of the work of redemption, which is the greater, and whereto all God's signs and miracles do refer."—LORD BACON'S CONFESSION OF FAITH.

ple I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord." The Saviour of mankind expressed himself in a similar manner: "The same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." "Believe me for the very work's sake." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin."

It has, however, been contended that miracle is impossible in the nature of things. For not denying its abstract practicability, which would be a dispute of the divine omnipotence, certain objectors argue that it supposes a fickleness, a deviation inconsistent with perfection. Did not God, it is speciously asked, design such an arrangement, and would He break in upon it? It is a sufficient answer, that this arrangement is not the effect of moral fitness but of sovereign pleasure, that there is nothing necessary or final in it, and that no pledge was ever given that it should be invariably preserved. The variation is as much a part of His eternal plan as that general regularity which it affects; and whatever is material cannot terminate on itself, but is always directed to strictly intellectual and religious results. Its subordination by miracle to some revealed system of truth and mercy lies within its most proper designs and probable uses.

And sophism has been added to cavil. Allow that miracle, it is remarked, could occur without an impeachment of divine intelligence that amounts to moral impossibility, testimony is a vehicle which is unsuited to transmit, is a confirmation unable to authenticate, it. But it may be replied, that the *report* of those parties who were warranted on the information of their senses to allow its existence, is as trustworthy as their *consciousness:* that whatever one man believes on right grounds, any other may who can ascertain that such grounds are tenable: that it always becomes us to give credence to

that whose denial would be absurd: that if we cannot doubt the *conviction* of them who were contemporary with these *extraordinary events*, and the *record* of that conviction—conviction which the rack could not terrify them to stifle, or the stake to quell—then it would be the height of unreasonableness to question that they did transpire. If it is conceded that a person who saw miracle might be authorized to acknowledge the fact, then is he equally justified in narrating it; and if nothing but the *subject* of the narrative gave rise to suspicion—it being strictly sifted, and irrefragably established genuine—it could not be invalidated without destroying the fidelity of sensible impressions the most cautious, protracted, and multiplied.

According to these objections, *experience* is alleged to be the criterion of *testimony*, and testimony is always to be discredited when in opposition to experience. But though experience may be, in some degree, the reason why we repose confidence in others—they having been found deserving of it, and general facts vouching for its necessity and truth—yet testimony is uniformly *antecedent* to it. For it is by the perception of the latter that the former is corrected and restrained: all our early knowledge is derived from the first, and only subsequent discipline is learnt by the second. Besides, what is experience? Whence know we that "all things have continued from the beginning?" What is the basis of the assertion, that the operations of nature have been, at all times and in all places, identical with each other? On what monument do we read its unvarying history? Which is the statute-book of its laws which can never be changed? Is it not the verdict of universal consent? Is it not the tale borne from father to son? Is it not the page on which generations have successively written their observations? Deny the province, abolish the authority, of *testimony*, and you instantly shatter the foundations of all

experience! The very same proof confirms the miraculous exception which establishes the general rule!

But we have to reason with other objecters now—the men who affect their desire for miracle, and not their disbelief of it. Without unkind suspicion, however, it may be feared, that it is the same class under a new disguise. The tone of the request betrays a scepticism of its answer. They ask for what they appear to have made up their minds to treat as an impossibility. It is thus they would cover their indifference, stipulate for their indecision, and render consistent and plausible their obstinate unbelief. They must have demonstration; it must be demonstration of the most perfect kind and degree; and nothing short of it can satisfy their love of truth, and their inquisitiveness of research! They only abide the proper time, they but await the proper disclosure, and are fully prepared with their adhesion, when the fitting proofs and infallible tokens are submitted to them! They must be regarded as intelligent creatures, and expect that a due consideration be paid to their reason! They will suspend their judgment for the present, and reserve, without prejudice to their present statement, the right of another conclusion! So far nothing has occurred to warrant their admission and adoption of Christianity—their assent to its truth, their compliance with its obligation! How shall the taunt be rebuked?

There comes a voice, though it is not addressed to "man upon earth." It speaks out of heaven; and though we catch its lesson as it rushes past, it thunders into the depth of hell. And it still resounds, and remonstrates with them who, either in perverse sincerity or sneering hypocrisy, ask of Christianity "to show them a sign from heaven."

Whatever may be the imaginative description, and the poetic machinery, of this Dreadful Tale, (and we are not expressly informed whether it is parable or history) its

lesson must be perfectly true to fact. Though these entreaties were never urged, though these dialogues were never held—though the "great gulf" be no more literally conceivable than the craving of the agonized spirit's parched tongue for the cooling drop—yet hell is not shut until a lesson is wrung from it, nor is heaven closed until its sanction is impressed upon that lesson. And what is it which is now inculcated to teach and warn us? which we read by the glare of infernal flames, and learn by the tuition of celestial accents? terrifically exemplified in the self-accusations of a soul irretrievably lost, but as tenderly urged by the sweet blessedness, the calm dignity, the inviolable safety of spirits coupled in their everlasting salvation—the father of the faithful placing at his side, and folding to his bosom, the spirit of this once-spurned lazar and beggar, lately received into heaven amid welcomes and escorts of its brightest and holiest ministry?

And the lesson, which such awful extremes have combined to strengthen and to enforce, is this: that God has established among us a moral dispensation, confirmed at its beginning with the most stupendous proofs of his authority and purpose: that this is formed of means which are calculated to convince and impress the mind that these means of conviction and impression are worthy of its divine character, and are adequate to their first intention: that it is an impious temerity to propose or wish any enlargement of them: that any coveted and hypothetical addition would be inapplicable and inefficient. There is now a liberty of choice, without a pretext of constraint, a full, without being an overpowering, appeal; more information would bewilder, more argument would confuse, more light would blast and extinguish the sense of vision.

I. THE ORDINARY MEANS OF RELIGIOUS CONVICTION AND IMPRESSION ARE MORALLY COMPLETE AND SUFFICIENT.

God made this earth for a proper end: he "created it

not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." Perhaps here we may find a strong presumption that all worlds can have no just use unless tenanted by being. We only, however, can determine the condition of our own species. Man was free, and could claim a standard of decision; he was accountable, and might allege a right to a law of conduct. We think that such style of language is warranted, and that to this attitude our nature might raise itself. But nothing more could be required of justice, or belonged to the necessity of the case.

But our Maker has accumulated a revelation of another order. He has sent to us "the great things" of discovered and assured mercy. Tidings reach us of pardon and regeneration; how guilt may be forgiven, and impurity cleansed. The sinner's character is drawn, that the sinner's case may be retrieved. His situation is pursued in its most exigent interests and fearful perils. All the *principles* of this revelation are deductions from so many *facts*. In its earlier portion it anticipated what should be *done* for our salvation, in the latter is the record of its *achievement*. The law we had broken is incorporated with it to show our need of salvation, and that our salvation consists in the restored opportunity and disposition of obedience. The "wrath to come" is made to flash out its "unquenchable fire," to expose the condemnation from which we are snatched, and to warn us the more recoilingly to flee from it. Let it never be forgotten that the means of salvation derive all their value from certain *deeds* which ever were believed as about to be accomplished, or as having been accomplished: that these means are founded upon them as their authorized report, fixed comment, and proclaimed intention. "Moses and the prophets" constituted a phrase well understood to describe the Jewish dispensation. It compendiously expressed the measure of religious knowledge then extant. Its principles are uniform with those of the Gospel, being conformed

to the same facts. Sacrifice and sanctification were taught by it in its expiations and ablutions: these were prospective intimations and types of the Saviour who should "by his own blood enter in once into the holy place," and of the Spirit whose "washing of regeneration" carries purity through the most defiled heart. "For what the law could not do,"* of what was it then incapable?—of justifying? at this moment he "who doeth it shall live by it:"—of renewing? it is the *guide* of moral disposition, and was never designed to produce it. The law could not do that which God did! He "condemned sin in the flesh:" that is, upon our nature as at present subsisting in this state of time and this scene of earth. The defeat of the law was attributed solely to the "weakness of our flesh." It had a right and a power of vengeance; but our present constituted being could not have sustained it. Our "spirit would have failed." "We should have perished from the way." Tophet must have been the sphere of retribution, and eternity would have been required for its infliction. But sin was "condemned," as most evil and malignant, "in the flesh:" on the earth it had defiled, on the nature it had ruined, and according to the existing system of things. He did it by "sending his own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, and for a sin-offering." Most terrible was the resentment of the sin, in this manner of extricating the sinner! The crime was denounced, adjudged, and avenged in the very act of justifying the criminal! And yet that law, whose incapacity was declared, was only honoured by the assistance rendered to it, and "its righteousness is still fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh but the spirit." This has been the tenor of all *gracious revelation:* it is God's call to man, not only requiring him to return, but providing the arrangements for effecting it.

The epitome of the divine truth, presented in the text,

* Rom. viii. 3, 4.

reminds us, that as spoken by Jesus Christ, it was speedily to receive an immense accession. He came that we might have "life more abundantly." He came to found "a ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit which should exceed in glory." He came to ratify a "better covenant established upon better promises." There was a peculiarity in the juncture of the announcement. The former economy had well-nigh run its race. John, the harbinger of the Messiah, was engaged in "restoring all things," or, in other words, bringing back that economy to its original intentions. His ministry was most peculiar; it seemed a living spirit, an intense power, a penetrating and consuming flame. In the desert or the palace, before multitudes or kings, he was the same. He came to honour the law, and to prepare for its dissolution. His voice was mournful as well as piercing—spoke of departing scenes and glories—and sounded as if the last blast of the Sinai trump. A modification of system was commencing: "the law and the prophets were *until* John:" and as "Moses wrote of" Christ, and to "him give all the prophets witness," so was the Baptist his special precursor and confessor—and was as "a voice crying," "He was before me," "Behold the Lamb of God." A fuller designation would now be requisite: we have not only Moses and the prophets, but Christ and the apostles. The whole is of a final character; and we may congratulate ourselves that we "are built upon the foundation of the *apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ* himself being the chief corner stone."

We must now bring ourselves to examine these *means,* in some of their distinctive features.

1. It appears that they were always submitted in a two-fold shape of *sign* and *utterance.* Long before the introduction of arbitrary characters in writing, a pictorial language was employed. This seems the radix and source of all. Men read, when altars, divers washings, and

bleeding victims, were the letters in which revelation was composed. If, as is probable, the present style was derived from the "hand-writing" of Jehovah on the mount, the sacred volume availed itself of the earliest instrumentality of abbreviated marks for its purposes. It is penned in languages most determinate and known. The former part lives in one which can never cease while the "tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast" are found in all the lands of the earth; the second breathes through another which has always been felt to be the music of expression, and the philosophy of thought. But as the inspiration of scripture is not only in its meaning, but as far in its phraseology (for we hold a strictly verbal and organic illapse) as to constitute it an infallible medium of such meaning,—so it was plainly intended that it should be translated into all the dialects of human speech. Whatever may be the deterioration of the process, it does not *necessarily* invalidate anything of its authority, and impair anything of its influence. The originals are very favourable to it by their union of copiousness with precision. Our Lord and his disciples sanctioned the principle by quoting from an uninspired version. And thus no embarrassment clogs the destined universality of "the lively oracles;" though most solemn is the trust, and most jealous should be the care, of those who render them into the various languages of the earth. We can say of every such copy, and every such translation —executed with fidelity—"This is the word of God." And we can, moreover, declare this confidence in strictest harmony with the *design* of that word, which though given in particular tongues, merely made the first selection that it might be transferred from them into all. And it is a blessed spectacle which in our age we behold. This "word runneth very swiftly." But recently no barriers existed,—not mountains, not seas,—so formidable as the difficulties of language. They arrested ideas which

might have spread through the community of mind, and checked feelings which could light up a universe. The harp of Zion could not rule its chords, and pour its melodies, in a strange land; the tones of taste and harmony, the magic sounds of Greece, would, beyond a certain boundary, be unintelligible, and he who spoke them would "be a barbarian." Through the dark night of persecution and superstition a scholarly penmanship traced the versions of many, and of the most important, idioms; until every polygraphic dream was surpassed by the powers of that wonder-working mechanism which gives to this result an indefinite multiplication, and an inevitable perpetuity. And may we not imagine the joy of those sacred writers, whose testimonies have been so long shut up in a speech unknown to the majority of our race,—now that those testimonies are repeated in a hundred vernaculars of the earth! Moses is preached in every city! There is no speech nor language where the strain of David is not heard! With other tongues and other lips Isaiah speaks to the people! Paul, while there are so many kinds of voices in the world, impresses his signification upon all! And John hears, articulate and vocal, a great multitude of all tongues, surrounding the heavenly throne! How long was this delayed. But now of what usefulness are they conscious! What a course of successes may they predict! Nations, of which they had never heard, repeat their names! New worlds hang over their compositions! The wells of their inspiration still rise and overflow! The awful instruments of their original announcement yet vibrate and ring! Their heaven refines and augments. With newer radiance each diadem burns, with fuller exultation each harp responds. Higher waves each palm, louder swells each song, while they continue to "declare God's glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people."—But it was always designed that this revelation should be *preached* as well as *read.*

In all ages, as to its objects, we may demand, "Have they not heard?" Noah was the preacher of righteousness to the old world. The ministers of the Old Testament, "read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and *gave* the *sense* and *caused them* to *understand* the reading." Most confessedly is this a christian ordinance. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" The sympathy of human manner attempers the dreadness of divine message; and the *standard* is within the reach of all,—"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The means of conviction and impression are thus uniformly written and parole.

2. It may be proper to justify the *aptitude* of the vehicle which God has prescribed for these moral purposes.

Whatever is mind and whatever is matter, that the intercourse may be maintained between them, something most singular in its contrivance is demanded. It must be of the one substance or the other. Organs of sensation are therefore given us, and these mysteriously link us with the external world. Material as the grossest and least susceptible parts, they are, in a way we know not, avenues to the soul,—bearing impressions to it which it corrects or allows, simplifies or compounds. It is not the eye which sees,—the perception being a mental act,—but without it there could be no vision. Now He who "knoweth our frame," who "formed the eye and planted the ear," explains his mind and will in forms adapted to our sensible nature. Though He has immediate access to the soul, yet the soul only becomes intelligent and accountable by its commerce with that which is without; and, therefore, it is the "entrance of his word" into it which gives it "light and understanding." Our two principal mediums of impression are—sight and hearing. These swell the fund of our ideas far more richly and nobly than the other senses. They are in most frequent and influential operation, they

partake most of the intellect. And, therefore, we are commanded to "search the *scriptures;*" therefore the apostles "testified of these things and wrote these things;" therefore they sought no higher appeal than "so it is written;" therefore they always "reasoned out" of the inspired volume as far as it was completed, and being inspired themselves, they were empowered to add "word or epistle." And still they "*preached* Christ crucified," they carried the "sound into all the earth," they "lifted up their voice and were not afraid." And these are the means perpetuated among ourselves. "The word is nigh" us: "whoso hath ears to hear let him hear." Now as it is obvious that a human being, always blind and deaf, could have no religious capability, because no mental existence, —so we must admire this adoption of a simple method in impressing upon external sense spiritual conception. But it is only a temporary tribute to *sense*, faith and piety henceforth occupy the interior, "the inner man is renewed day by day," there is the "life of God," there is the heir of heaven "walking in the light." What is inferior in "this corruption and this mortal," "this vile body," and "this body of death," is made auxiliary to the highest ends of knowledge and purity. It refines what is corporeally gross into the index and instrument of all that is most transparent in thought and elevated in emotion: it displaces the associations of time by the visions of eternity. If Revelation be blamed for its manner of addressing us, we have only to answer that it no further complies with the conditions of our lower nature than to make itself intelligible, and that being once understood, it causes the spirit of man to expatiate amidst scenes of more native excellence and congenial splendour.

3. The *tendency* of these means is sufficiently apparent. The "law which is perfect" is adapted to "convert the soul." The "word which is engrafted" is "able to save it." The "word which is truth," is calculated to "sanc-

tify it." And but that the circumstances, which require these moral renovations, present the barriers to its success, the Gospel might be left to win its own course and its own victory. It is so fit, so searching, so holy, than any state, in the least susceptible, must have yielded to it. Why does not the human mind at once embrace it? The reply is, that such is man's perverseness and enmity against religious truth, that no foreign appeal, no objective reasoning, can overcome it. The power to change the heart must be exercised from within—that "exceeding greatness of power" which can penetrate it, and then open it to the train of all holy reflections and motives. It does not resemble the bolt which rives the rock, but rather that invisibly forming and germinating influence which unfolds the rose-bud, developing its beauty and exhaling its fragrance—meeting, however, every external auspice in the vernal gale, the morning dew, the noon-tide heat. And these views lead to an important *distinction*—the depravity of *human nature* constitutes the occasion of Divine influence, and not evangelical truth. It is not man's want of reason, but its perversion, which obscures revelation from him: it is his disrelish and dislike of its constituent principles. But while this influence communicates another disposition to the soul, (all that is wanted for its conversion) it leaves the Gospel in its own independence. It strengthens none of its claims, it heightens none of its attractions. It lays it under no obligations of revision or improvement. Man is the sole debtor, as he is the exclusive subject. The Spirit of Truth reveals it, but it is incapable of any change but to that altered view and feeling which depends upon a particular state of mind. The difference is of perception and regard, in which it is passive. Never let us speak as though it required any thing. Never let us represent it but as "the work of God which is perfect." Never let us disparage it by any comparisons which would describe it feeble and

unworthy, but for a superadded might. It has no "weakness and unprofitableness:" no inbecility and defect. And another *distinction* is consequent upon this: man labours under no disqualification of *power*, (unless used scholastically) but is restrained by a *rebellious will*. He *can* believe, he *can* repent; he does both daily, when the testimony of faith and the cause of regret are of the slightest kind. His understanding is capable of giving credit: his heart of entertaining contrition. But he is morally disaffected: his inclination is averse. This cannot excuse him: this cannot vary his obligation. The authority of the Gospel is, all the time, the same. Otherwise a criminal might claim an acquittal upon the ground of disapproving the law he had broken, and of not feeling a wish to obey it! Whatever a creature was at any time bound to do, morally considered, he must be irreversibly. The damned have not survived their duty to love their God!—Such distinctions are of the very argument which establishes the sufficiency of those means which Christianity presents,—that sufficiency not being in the least degree affected by the necessity, only relative, of Divine influence to remove our indisposition on the one hand, or by the existence of that indisposition on the other.

Still the voice urges, concerning Moses and the prophets —we subjoin, Christ and the apostles—"Let them hear them!" And the appeal, founded on the completeness of apparatus, the fulness of discovery, the force of principle involved in Christianity, may not be unseasonably illustrated.

There is proof to satisfy every judgment.

Falsehood is not a gratuitous device. The fixed correspondence between words and things belongs to the earliest evolution of the mind, and cannot be evaded but for some countervailing intent. In indifferent and impartial circumstances veracity may be expected; it is the most easy and natural course. We ask, then, if the first

disciples of the Gospel did *not believe* that *miracles* had occurred, what could induce them to invent the story? What did they gain? Men are swayed by the cupidity of wealth, by the fame of enterprise, by the love of ease. But these motives could have no place in minds which saw before them certain poverty, contempt, and death. Did posthumous honour allure them? The denier of a future state can never know this sentiment, and the believer in one would be unable to connect its hope with imposture.—But again we ask, if they *did* believe such miracles, on what ground can their testimony be disputed? How arose it that men of far distant places, and as distant ages, (for the question of revelation is identical) agreed together in so strange an impression, contrary to whatever was known or anticipated? Whence was the concord of parties held together by no common tye? By what charm did man, whose "days are few," make common cause with the stranger of another century, enter into his feelings, and interchange with him his own?—But *prophecy*, which is intellectual miracle, yields evidence not less decisive. As it has been granted by the sceptic that nothing, however incredible, is to be rejected if the alternative be more incredible still, so the coincidences between the guess—if prophecy be only it—and the fulfilment of the guess, imply a chain of difficulties overcome, and of improbabilities elicited, more than equal to the fact for which they are substituted, and without its confessedly competent agency.—Look into the constitution of Christianity. What an unearthliness of character! What a sensitiveness of morality! What a divinity of piety! Call it a forgery, and either the weakest of men struck out the brilliant fable, or the most wicked wrought this creation of peerless excellence and virtue.—Look upon the influence of Christianity. What has it not done? It has sown the seeds of civilization and refinement; banished vices upon which philosophy dilated without a hesitation, and

beauty gazed without a blush; forms the individual and the nation on a model of which the ancient sage was never wont to dream; and surrounds itself with a mild lustre of loveliness, convincing as the insufferable blaze of its prodigies.—It is a system of *persuasion.* "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Its teachers can say, "We persuade men," and its disciples, "We thus judge." There is nothing occult or coercive in it: the man must be determined to blind himself who disbelieves, to destroy himself who withstands, it!

There is attraction to awaken every interest.

Principles may convince by their naked truth, and yet leave the heart untouched. Abstractions may occupy some recess of the understanding, and never excite our warmer and more active emotions. But the Gospel is an expostulation with *self-love.* It calls on *shame, gratitude,* and *pity.* It lays hold of our *hope* and *fear.* With what a captivating grace does it visit us! It is the good news of salvation! Infinite compassion transfuses itself through all its discoveries and entreaties! "Why will ye die?" "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How solemn is its pathos, how pathetic is its solemnity! It is the weeping rebuke of mercy warning us into its arms! He, and only he, can tell what music is in these truths and consolations on whose ear the sentence of the broken law has grated, and its curse has rung. The harmonies of the universe have no strain like this, "I am pacified toward thee!"

There is an appeal to every class of character.

When the philosopher tells me how my mental system, that which lies within my consciousness, is affected and governed—in what order its phenomena succeed, in what manner they influence, each other—I acknowledge the profundity of his examination into the laws and states of the human mind. When a physician not only determines my disease, upon a survey of its more obvious symptoms,

but informs me of its every secret stage, each pain and languor known only to myself, I honour his acquaintance with all the particularities of morbid action. And yet in these instances there was a general ground of knowledge, a common subject of inquiry. The *mind* and the *disease*, investigated in one, might be inferred in all. But in *character* there is a more specific individuality. Its modifications are endless as they are unaccountable. And still Christianity, with the minutest observation and with an insulating power, makes the sinner tremble as though each warning was pointed at him, and rejoice as though each solace had been prepared for his relief. He feels himself in the very focus of its aim. The self-conclusion is inevitable as that which the guilty monarch drew when there "came forth fingers of a man's hand," and he was convinced that they, of all his thousand guests, wrote his doom. And the convicted sinner equally realizes the personal reference of every invitation and promise: and while he comes to Jesus it is to *him* it is said, "*Him* that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" and while he flies to refresh his thirst, it is to *him* the assurance is repeated, "I will give unto *him* that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

There is a provision for every extent of guilt.

The infinity of merit in the atonement of the cross does not seem to meet the full demand of the sinner's case. It is true, that there is, that there must be, such infinity, but many current statements favour the idea of an *undirected* and *inapplicable* store. We hesitate not to go further: no statement would embody our convictions which did not set forth the atonement as universal in its character as it is infinite in its virtue,—which did not assert that it was legislatively designed for all, and made the basis for the moral treatment of all. The fact of an excess, when that is but a necessary effect of circumstances, proves nothing, accomplishes nothing, consoles

nothing: give it a meaning, a use, a direct intention,—and there is an intelligible idea, an available blessing. And this is our rational consistency in calling on men to believe and embrace the testimony of the Gospel—not that there is a sufficiency only, but a warrant of that sufficiency—not that there is bread enough and to spare, but that it is placed on a "table of shew-bread"—and that the Gospel makes such a constitution its express purpose and its unambiguous avowal. Why should we restrict and sophisticate its mighty generalities? Can language have wider scope than it employs? And therefore it is, that the Gospel should be preached with the authority and power of a perfect confidence. We, "having believed, should also preach." We can never go beyond the word of the Lord, in its *anointed character*, any more than in its *admitted efficacy*. There is not among the debtors of justice, the captives of sin, the prisoners of condemnation—an obligation which it is not *sincere in proposing* to cancel, a chain which it is not *commissioned* to burst, a sentence which it is not *ordained* to absolve.

It comprises the means of our regeneration.

Pardon only leaves us in a state of exemption from punishment: it does not properly, nor necessarily, bestow a taste for purity and a disposition of obedience. A renovation of nature is as indispensable to the sinner as a reversal of condition. But the holy volume does not accomplish this effect, nor does the preaching of its contents: neither is it accomplished without their intervention and application. And therefore a "newness of spirit," though doubtless depending on an extrinsic cause, may be considered a *blessing* as well as a *truth* of the Gospel. For it not only enjoins that we "must be born again," it not only expounds the manner and the agency by which the change is wrought, it is the appointed and exclusive contrivance. Foreign circumstances may induce men to think, to relent, to realize to themselves the truth, but

nothing, save that truth, can sanctify. Where is the fanatic to be found who would maintain that the Holy Spirit illuminated the mind in evangelical principles, which never before, nor subsequently, had access to revelation? No matter how the truth has been injected into the mind—whether by education, by general report and impression, or by more direct methods—it is by this expedient that the agent of regeneration alone does, can alone, produce it. He has no other means: though "He searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." He is as morally unable to sanctify the heart without the Gospel, as He, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," is to pardon sin without the Atonement. Such fact we learn from numerous and intelligible passages of Scripture. "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God." "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." Well, therefore, may we kiss the word as the rod with which the Comforter only smites to heal, "a rod out of the stem of Jesse." Well, therefore, may we venerate the truth with a holy awe, even "tremble at" it, as the instrument which an Almighty hand has often wielded; which bears the characters of its sacred appropriation; and which seems to retain a vibration of that power, and a glow of that splendour, which have enforced or accompanied its blessed use.

It supplies the motives for our conduct.

Itself the model of excellence, it illustrates its reasonableness and urges its pursuit. But it is not a preceptive morality, one of self-government and benevolence, to which it confines itself. It invites a higher class of duties. It calls for a constancy of profession unto beggary and death. A very crucifixion to the world, in all its present conveniencies and sympathies, does it place among its foremost and paramount demands. Here is an inversion

of nature. Here is a revolt of every ordinary idea and sensibility. And yet this is the heroic virtue which it has formed. In this virtue there is no blind enthusiasm, but its motives admit of the most discriminating inspection. Instead of claiming too much from man, man has become dignified in yielding himself up to the claim. Instead of receiving a sullen obedience, all has breathed alacrity and joy. They, who "for conscience' sake," were plundered of their earthly all, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods;" and they who were summoned to death in its most cruel forms, "counted not their lives dear unto themselves." There must have been high inducement to reconcile our nature to these evils. And Christianity is a system perfect in its motives. While it never quits our side by the hearth of domestic quiet, and in the walk of peaceful avocation—always directing our ignorance, and upholding our weakness—by soft whispers and gentle impulses, counselling and guiding us;—it forewarns of other scenes, and stands ready to arouse us with more stirring encitements; bids us follow it to the high place and engage, on its behalf, in the joined battle; and when the trial seems too fiery, and the shock too overwhelming, it makes the duty sweet, and the performance easy, as to listen to the melody of the untraversed grove, and gaze on the sunset of the calmest day.

It administers relief to our affliction.

Grief is a simple thing, and asks for commiseration and confidence. The manner of the application is often important as the solace itself. Kind must be the accent, the look, the touch. Now, the Gospel is "the *tender mercy* of our God." It exhibits him as "the God of consolation," as "the God that comforteth those that are cast down." It seeks out the abode and bosom of wretchedness. Tears are the attractions which it acknowledges, sighs are the calls which it obeys. It is the continued expression of the pity which, when commanding the empire of death to

restore the brother to the disconsolate sisters of Bethany, itself could weep;—which looked down from the cross of Calvary, and amidst the unutterable horrors and portents of that scene, distinguished a mother's form, and soothed a mother's bereavement. O this is the Religion of the forlorn and oppressed, the poor and needy! It opens its heart of infinite yearnings to them. It bends to hear each tale of woe. Its chosen station is close to the pallet of poverty, and the bed of death. In the house of mourning it consecrates its home. It causes no tear but that of repentance, and that is sweeter far than the worldling's fullest, brightest tear of joy. Every other tear it loves and cares to dry, nor forgoes its soothing and healing course until it has carried the mourner whither no grief can follow him, and where "God shall wipe all tears from his eyes." How lovely is the Religion which can bid the rod of affliction to blossom, and make a smile play around the grimmest features of death!

And though in arguing for the sufficiency of these means, we distinguish between that which is moral, and that which is efficacious,—yet we are justified in maintaining that *an influence* is connected with their dispensation. "The Holy Spirit is given to all them who ask Him." Such influence cannot be uniform and essential,—but it will surely vindicate its *sovereignty*, in the eyes of them to whom this quality is obnoxious, that the sinner never was refused who sought the boon. The want of a disposition towards it, is a barrier the most strict and stumbling,—but "God tempteth no man," and disposition or will is the very subject of accountability. "The residue of the Spirit" is a portion of "the fulness which dwells in Christ," and sinners are as welcome to a participation in his fulness as to an interest in his blood.—Such influence could never be *necessary* to a righteous government and moral scheme; and still its *promise* ensures to Christianity a success, and to every suppliant an answer.

These are the means which God has founded, and which retain their perennial character. By them "He saves them who believe." Other means we know not than the Bible, unfolded to the eye, and proclaimed to the ear. Circumstances of imperative authority, external to this book, enforce them. Institutes and appointments raise attention and habituate regularity. The Sabbath, the Church, the Baptismal rite, the Christian feast; are placed in the same connection. All have a tendency to convince and impress. Thus we are dealt with. Our rational apprehensions are addressed, our warmer affections are excited. These means survive all changes, and may be assimilated to the deeper springs of nature, the freshness of which cannot be impaired, nor their fulness exhausted; or to the ordinances of heaven—fixed, pacific, unwearying, magnificent,—and, like them, only to perish with the firmament itself.

But men indulge other sentiments. They would fondly convince themselves that their unbelief is excusable because these means are not necessarily and inevitably resistless. They require a mechanical violence, a physical force, to satisfy them. They must be put into circumstances which shall leave them no liberty of decision. By one of those unsound, though common, maxims which are repeated until they are allowed, they would confound an impression of sense and a result of belief. "Seeing is believing," is the foolish saw which comes to their assistance. Now there are not two acts more contrary. The one depends upon an organ, and the other on a conclusion formed according to a testimony. Should it be said that we believe the information of our senses, it is only a figurative form of expression; unless in the lips of the man who, knowing how certain speculatists have denied even the validity of this information, measures, by these cautious words, the steps by which he has become assured concerning it. He who has extricated himself from the

phantom-philosophy will only understand the language with any distinctness, or employ it with any right.—Now we argue, that "if one went to them from the dead, they would not repent:" that if the moral instrumentality failed, the supernatural demonstration would not succeed.

II. ANY SUPPLEMENTARY METHODS OF CONVICTION AND IMPRESSION, FOUNDED UPON MIRACULOUS AGENCY, WOULD BE INAPPOSITE AND INEFFECTIVE.

The *kind* of interposition which men might seek would probably be very different: each would have his favourite scheme and prevailing taste. Their sign would be "either in the depth, or in the height above." Whatever it was, it could remove no difficulty, as it satisfied but one party. The allusion of the text is to the apparitions of the dead. The grave is supposed to yield its prisoner; the departed spirit, acquainted with "the eternal blazon," is conceived to reanimate and inform the lifeless body; again the familiar eye opens and the oft-heard tongue speaks; the once welcomed visitant of kindred and friendship is now clothed with all the authority and interest of a herald from the unseen world, and of an interpreter who can disclose its mysteries. No miracle could be more decisive, — and then, as oral communication and dread discovery were associated with it, none could be more instructive. Nothing could exceed it in solemnity, power, and impression. It would not only be material but rational, not only a change wrought on brute substance but on conscious spirit—the recall of a soul from the gate of death, and from the region of immortality. It would be of little additional interest in what manner the scene was prepared—whether as a mysterious traveller the spirit joined itself to us, or whether as a radiant vision it burst upon us. Such a manifestation must comprise every advantage of miracle; and we shall principally avail ourselves of it, in the prosecution of the argument, though our remarks will concern themselves with the general question.

1. There is nothing which we feel to be so terrific as the thought of a spiritual presence, and a contact with the spiritual being. This may be variously accounted for; but, respecting the truth of the observation, there can exist no doubt. When the angel has stooped to our earth on some important mission, men have apprehended that they should surely die. When the spectre has glared upon them, and, with its sepulchral voice, has addressed them, their blood has curdled, their nerve has shrunk, their heart has turned to ice. It is not for us now to inquire whether these appearances have been real: this has been the effect. We neither beg nor rebut the question, at this step of remark, relative to another and immaterial world; but this is the popular impression. The most enlightened and dispassionate have known a shudder and a trepidation. The horror of a Dion is far more natural than the phlegm of a Brutus. We sympathize with the disciples who, when Jesus walked on the sea, "were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and cried out for fear;" who, when He suddenly presented himself among them after his resurrection, "were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Most terrific is the description which Eliphaz records of the midnight monitor who glided into his chamber and broke upon his solitude,—the shadowy outline, the abrupt narrative, but creates a deeper suspense, a more harrowing, thrilling sensation!—"Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice." This is the sublimity of fear; and it is only sublime by its fidelity to nature and fact. But is this a disposition and mood of the mind

favourable to cautious deliberation and sober purpose? Is the stupefaction and dismay, consequent on such a visitation, congenial to inquiry and peace? Would it not leave "thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?" Might it not endanger the empire of reason, and distract the temperament of fancy? Religion is a "judgment of what is right;" its requirement is a "reasonable service;" its influence is not "the spirit of fear, but of a sound mind." Than consternation — the effect of *everything supernatural*—nothing is more ill-adapted to "the reason of the hope that is in us," unless it be utter indifference itself.

2. As all our ideas are related to our perceptions, language is necessarily built upon sensible analogies. The organs being the only mediums of present knowledge, symbols and comparisons are the only methods of present illustration. Were any other language to be addressed to us, conveying to us any other thoughts, it would neither reach our sense, nor coalesce with our intellect. Conceptions, formed by incorporeal beings, and signified by ethereal representations, must be perfectly unintelligible to our compound nature, holding its only commerce with an external world. There was one * who, for fourteen years, had revolved what occurred to him, and impressed itself on him, during a rapture in the third heaven. The traces were too serious and deep for any lapse of time, or change of circumstance, to impair. The visions of the Almighty had flashed forth upon his spirit: existences and modes of existence had risen before him such as imagination never attempted to realize and describe. Bodiless, impalpable essences gleamed across his view, which no known discourse of man could pourtray. He was girded in by a scenery which earthly elements and colours were not formed to paint. They were spectacles of which our world contained no type, and voices which

* II. Cor. xii. 1, 4.

could propagate no impulse on our atmosphere. What information does the descended Paul convey? What of the nature of that region, which of its glorious marvels, does he explain? And yet these mysteries were only not to be interpreted because they were incapable of interpretation,—it was not lawful, only because it was impossible, to utter them. There is nothing common between the senses of embodied, and the ideas of disembodied, men. All reciprocation is precluded by their opposite conditions. Should, therefore, the minister of warning leave the spiritual world and alight on this, he could not make use of our impressions to superinduce his own. Let him, say the objectors, "testify unto them" who now live in this probationary scene. But they must be reminded that the testimony would be deficient, that whatever was removed from the associations of our knowledge could only be pictured through them,—and that whatever was more *explicit* than figure and allusion, would, to the same degree, be only more obscure and incomprehensible. The direct disclosure of spiritualism and eternity, by one sent from the dead to the living, would be like "confounding their language, that they might not understand one another's speech."

3. Since it is not to be supposed that the wish of *every* one should be gratified in the time and manner of these resurrections from the dead—since none are sufficiently extravagant to suppose that any Power would leave the question with each, "Whom shall I bring up unto Thee?" —there must be some point of limitation. At that point commences the business of testimony. He who has seen the dead burst their cerements, could not long conceal the secret. Unlike private opinion, the impression of this occurrence must have its way. It, during every moment of silence, would be "a fire shut up in the bones." And concealment would be as unjust as difficult. The miracle being "to testify," they who were signalized by its exhi-

bition ought to make it known to others. And what would be the probable reception of the tale? A general suspicion would be immediately entertained of the narrator's solidity of mind. There would be suggestions of phantasma and excited fancy. Reference would be made to optical disease and spectral illusion. And the result of all might be, that the recital was not only scouted, but that the man himself would, from the reasoning of some and the ridicule of others, abandon his own convictions, by having learnt to discredit his own sensations.

4. The excitement of miracle is generally lessened by the nearer approach to its crisis and scene. The remark is borne out by somewhat analogous circumstances. Let us hear, from afar, of the pestilence—its dark march, its desolating fury, its gradual encroachment—and the panic shoots through a community. Let the evil arrive—more calamitously and sweepingly than apprehended—recklessness takes the place of alarm, and levity of seriousness. The reverse we should deem more natural; but it is contradicted by notorious facts. And let us not suppose that miracles produced all the curiosity and stir which their character would justify. It is true that the Evangelists do not commonly state the influence of their Master's mighty deeds on the popular mind. Enough is, however, told to satisfy us that they were most convincing and resplendent: and that they, who were their subjects or spectators, disclosed them, though often charged to conceal them—and did "the more blaze them abroad." Here was publication. But did they raise the inquiry, or attract the notice, of the great and the learned? Did those, upon the very spot, trouble themselves to give them a passing survey? Would not such wonders have repaid a glancing eye, or slackened step, while the Pharisee hastened on? This momentary notice was not deigned. And we may cite the instance of Paul himself. All the plausibilities are, that his education in Jerusalem was con-

ducted at the time of our Saviour's ministry. Many must have been the facilities for seeing Him who at last entered that city with triumph, and did his latest wonders in the temple. It appears inconceivable, that the sanguine youth, that the cultivated pupil, would omit an opportunity of marking His person, hearing one discourse, and beholding one achievement. It may be inferred that he never so much as saw Him! To say nothing of the silence which he surely must have broken, if there were a single remembrance of Him whom he had persecuted—he speaks in this manner: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed unto us by them who heard him?*" His exclusion is evidently from what was *personal* and not *official:* he having, by his miraculous conversion and rapture, been warranted to say, "And last of all, He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." And if such a man was too prejudiced, or too indifferent, to seek a view of the Messiah's form, or to catch a tone of his voice, we may argue how many would follow the same course, and how uninfluential is miracle when it cannot excite even the attention necessary to examine it.

This is our first class of remarks, showing that these mighty works are little calculated to convert, from the horror of those who contemplate them disqualifying them to judge; from the impossibility of a perfect disclosure to our senses of realities with which the senses have no affinity; from the scepticism of mankind, which might not only withstand the evidence, but even corrupt the witness; and from the egregious insensibility which the closest vicinage to miracle, and the fullest opportunity of canvassing it, do not generally disturb. Another class of observations now presses upon us, relating to the positive incongruity of this instrument: the former demonstrated its *inadequacy*, this will establish its *inadmissibility.*

1. Unless miracle be sparingly used it loses its effect. The power which has wrought one, may produce any number: but the same act, though repeated most monotonously, may be altered in its character. That which *was* miracle, may *now* cease to be it. For the idea of this attestation is, that it departs and differs from the ordinary constitution of things. If the sun and moon stand still, if the laws of death be overcome, we observe these events because contrary to all tendency and arrangement as notified to us. Still if these events might be expected, if they followed in a regular course, though precisely identical in process and form, they would altogether vary in import and evidence. Let a chain of miracles be drawn through every age, and around every individual, and the term is a solecism. The circumstance of frequency is the vitiating principle. But they who imagine that persuasion would follow a resurrection from the dead, necessitate a constant recurrence of these acts: in a word, their demand for miracle destroys the very character, which can never attach to the *grandest* displays of Divine power, when interwoven into a strict order and uniform series.

2. The *nature* of the revelation, which we call the Gospel, is frequently set forth in Scripture; it is "the *record* which God hath given of his Son;" it is the "*testimony* of God and of Christ;" it is a "witness to all nations;" it is a "faithful saying;" it is "the faithful word." The veracity of him who testifies, is the common ground of belief in a testimony; while the most satisfactory evidences of its truth may be found in the testimony itself. The operation of mind is necessarily one of assent and confidence: until these be exercised, the subject is not brought into any connection with us, or into any capacity of influencing us. Christianity conveys to us the word of salvation; and it requires our belief of it. It comes in the shape of testimony, and credit is to be attached to it. "We walk by faith, and not by sight."

Its purpose is to divert us from material notices, and to bind us to the simple and cordial "belief of the truth." There must be a value in this purpose: faith must be more fitting and useful than sensible impression. It must be more accordant with the Gospel, and more beneficial to ourselves, thus to arrive at the conclusion that *it* is true, and thus to acquire the way by which *we* may become interested in it. But miracle would trench upon the province and faculty of testimony; would introduce sense to the disparagement of faith; would throw back the dispensation from its maturity; would unsettle the best known and most divinely pledged character which the "word of the truth of the Gospel" has ever received, as well as the strongest foundations on which human conviction has ever rested. "He that hath received the testimony of Christ, hath set to his seal that God is true." Grant but the prayer for miracle, and the Gospel is no longer a testimony, nor faith a grace!

3. Miracle belongs to an early and imperfect stage of the Christian revelation. It is a part of its first apparatus—of its scaffolding and machinery. Most necessary was it when the cause, it asserted, was new—to indicate it as a divine religion, and to urge it as a divine enforcement. But we now possess that state of consummated truth and blessing to which all this magnificence of the supernatural—this awful sway over inveterate disease and extinguished sense, elemental strife and demon rage—were but tributes of homage and means of confirmation. The canon of Scripture being complete, and whatever was preliminary being now adjusted, we may deem ourselves to occupy a most favourable position. We have the perfect volume with the perfect proof. Even in regard to the signs and wonders which surrounded Christianity in its infancy, as guardians and attendants,—we may consider ourselves as most enviably circumstanced. We can behold them, from our present eminence, in their unity of rank

and spirit. We can trace their analogy to the system which is now seen in all its tenderness and love. We can review them aloof from that bitter temper which disappointed ambition and exasperated prejudice foment. Nothing national, nothing ancestral, opposes our profession of their reality and grandeur. Their succession, their decisiveness as attestations, their beauty as emblems, strike us as they could not cotemporary eyes. We may, therefore, congratulate ourselves that those evidences, which are most external, are really more interesting *now* than at the period of their exhibition. Do we not see how they affected the primitive disciples? Do we not learn their general acknowledgment from the general conversion of mankind? Do we not ascertain how they were appealed to by those who never took an uncertain ground? We, so to speak, survey the scene from that central point at which the fall of light and the angle of vision are most happily adapted to excite our wonder and correct our apprehension. But now to call for miracle, is to desire a return to the nonage and weakness of Christianity—is to forget or deny that superiority which is allotted to us on whom "the ends of the dispensation have come"—is to descend from the calm, in which we can explore the *miracle of testimony*, into the contentions which have often embroiled the *testimony of miracle.*

But if preternatural indications be *ineffective* as moral means, and if they can additionally be proved *illegitimate* in the present instance, a third class of reasonings will expose the causes of their *unsuitableness* to produce any true conversion, any saving result.

1. Conviction, when it reaches a certain point, is incapable of any *conscious* increase in its strength and practical influence. The most variously elaborated, the most frequently multiplied, demonstrations, would not very perceptibly fortify our belief if that were founded on one perfectly conclusive. We might be astonished and

delighted; but our minds were assured, and our opinions formed, when we mastered the first. Millions, upon the present evidence of Christianity, have attained to a persuasion which left to them no doubt and exception—which suffered them not a hesitating moment and feeling between its maintenance and violent death—which blended itself with all that was intuitive and conscious in their minds. What could have made the confessor bolder, or the martyr more brave? What could have raised their faith, or strengthened their constancy? That evidence is before us, it deserves the most complete admission, and warrants the most decided assent. We need not wonder that miracle, therefore, fails to produce the boasted effect, and that the addition of any other would be abortive—since all are competent to adjudge the existing amount of evidence—the believer knowing that the highest pitch of his conviction cannot exceed it, and the unbeliever exemplifying that, if it does not satisfy him, no variation or increase of it could—though the letters were sunbeams, and the sounds were thunders.

2. It is complained by the sceptic, that the process of inquiry is circuitous, that the course of examination is slow—that writings are to be verified, witnesses to be tried, and motives to be sifted. He suggests a more ready method—let the debate be ended by an appeal to miracle. Be, then, such miracle performed. Being sensible it could only be inspected by a definite number of persons—occurring at a given time as well as place—many cotemporaries, and all posterity, must be unacquainted with its merits. The sceptic might now aver his full acquiescence in Christianity: he would confirm *his* judgment by that unanimous impression which had been made on *all* who witnessed the miracle along with himself. He and they report it, and expect to be believed. He and they consider that all dispute has ceased. But these parties only stand in the circumstances of the first

Christians! They cannot employ more undoubting affirmations, they cannot be subjected to more rigid ordeals—they cannot furnish better proofs of veracity and tests of sincerity. Yet *they* reject the allegations of the first Christians, and hope that they themselves shall be believed! To say nothing of this inconsistency in their conduct, this improbability in their expectation,—what would have been gained by the concession? The very men who disavowed Christianity, on account of its peculiar evidence, upon the repetition of the same evidence at their own request, call upon all to embrace it. Thus the original system of examination and ground of belief —the butt of objection—is to be renewed. Age after age is to have its miracle, the testimony to that miracle, and the adherents to that testimony. Again and again the business of evidence is to be begun afresh; and that evidence, too, which if ever faulty and defective, must continue as faulty and defective through every step of its transmission.—But this might not only be the cause of inefficiency in the miracle: the proposed arrangement would include another disadvantage. Might it not be deemed a reflection upon the *primitive* evidence, if it was, after this order, renovated? Would not the secondary series be equally disparaged by the third? Would not the succession be attenuated until the conviction of the most remote descendants would be, that a religion which was compelled to submit to these reiterated attestations, and still left men as incredulous and impatient of these attestations as before, *never did* possess a valid authenticity, and never ought to have challenged a reasonable faith.

3. There is a distinction between acts which are voluntary and involuntary. Every act, to be *moral*, or the subject of accountability, must be willingly and self-determinately performed. If my arm is seized by an external power and compelled to commit that from which

my mind revolts, it is not within my responsibility. I am the passive, unconsenting instrument. Now, in the impressions made upon our senses, we are almost in the same predicament. Choice is denied us. We may close our eyes and stop our ears, but numberless sights and sounds are borne to these organs, over which we have no control. A miracle might be executed before us. We could not fail to observe it. But this would be necessary and not optional, and therefore the observation would partake of no moral quality. What, that is commendable—what, that supposes disposition and motive—what, that refers to law and recompense, could such act contain? It is not questioned that the *examination* of miracle may spring from a holy and a praise-worthy temper of mind. But it is of the single process, through which the *senses* pass, that we now speak. And if it be not a moral sentiment, we need not wonder that men are not "persuaded" by it: we need not wonder that it sets in motion no train of pious reflections and devout sensibilities. It has only so far been a per-force admission—a nerve has been impinged, a sense has been excited—but an unreasoning and irreligious creature might have undergone the same obtrusion, and not have, more certainly than the man himself, resisted the proper review and the just inference.

4. When miracle has been displayed, there can be no doubt of its intention. It is to call human attention to some great principle, some important truth. It is the unison of Almighty power with Infinite love. It certifies and urges revelation. We might conclude, therefore, that men would never mark the one without following out the other. And if this were so, miracle might have, in its consequences, a persuasive power. But the ideas of the *reality* belonging to a supernatural occurrence, and of the *truth* involved in a particular religion which it has transpired to confirm, are not uniformly, nor frequently,

associated in the mind of the spectator. Curiosity may gaze with a perfect vacancy of speculation. We have now only to do with the fact as one of history. Thousands were fed by our Lord through the most palpable operations of miraculous skill and might. Thousands witnessed his cures of disease, and his exorcism of demons. Yet how seldom did the conviction occur to them that, if these things were true, so also must be the doctrine He taught!

Herod "hoped to have seen some miracle done by him;" but it is abundantly clear, that had his wish been gratified, he did not surmise that it would pledge him to the allowance of any particular religious system. The Pharisees even accused him of casting out devils by the prince of devils!* And if any proof be wanted to demonstrate how dissevered these convictions of a miracle and a mission may be, let us advert to the portents which solemnized the sacrifice of the cross. It is a terrific scene! The noon of day is dark as the noon of night! The silence of death is disturbed! The veil of the temple is torn from the top to the bottom! The solid globe trembles! The massive rock splits! Once the sun stood still on Gibeon,—why is it stayed in its course, covered with sackcloth, turned into blood, over Calvary? Graves have, at distant intervals, yawned and resigned their prisoners,—why do so many now simultaneously rend, and why do so many of their sleeping captives, without a signal, rise? The sanctities of the temple have, ere this, been profaned,—but why is its tapestry now, without a visible agency, torn asunder? Earth has known strange tremours, the land has been

* How little competent the pagan world was to decipher the meaning and connection of those omens, which they esteemed real, may be gathered from the classical historians. Thus Tacitus, in his Annals, (and we overlook not the sarcasm) says:—"Prodigia quoque crebra et irrita intercessere . . . . . quæ adeò sinè curâ deûm eveniebant, ut multos post annos Nero imperium et scelera continuaverit." In his History, relating the prodigies which foreboded the overthrow of Jerusalem, he marks the little and narrow impression they excited:—"Quæ panci in metum trahebant."

heaved into billows as the sea,—but why does it now suffer these convulsions, and struggle with these throes? Rocks, when God's "fury is poured out like fire, have been thrown down by him,"—but why do they now burst and shiver? The multitude, the connection, the conjuncture of these phenomena supplied an assemblage of awful demonstrations: they struck a panic, they produced a change of feeling and conduct. They, who had wagged their heads, now smote upon their breasts. It was "a compunctious visiting of nature," and nothing more. And only a few, and those from whom the confession might have been least expected, cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God."

5. Supposing that there is no evasion of the lesson and doctrine inculcated by a miracle, it by no means follows that the mind receives them with cordiality and affection. The reasonable association may have forced itself upon it, that both are equally, and consecutively, true. But as the impression of miracle was violent, so the belief of that, which it seals, may be constrained. The heart may rebel against it. It may seem "as a strange thing." It may be endured as an object of terror and aversion. It may not be disputed, and yet not be loved. Men may regard it as Ahab did Micaiah,—knowing he was a prophet, yet outraging him for prophesying only evil. They may be as unable to resist, as to cherish, the light; and like Satan, described by our bard, glance but at the sun, "to tell it how he hates its beams." The Gospel is a scheme of particular instructions. These may be mechanically enforced, or morally entertained. They may be assented to as moving in the train of a miracle; there may be a general apprehension of their meaning; and nothing short of enmity may scowl upon them. The bond, which shackles them to the mind, is no tie of its own: the supernatural evidence is the iron chain which, while it leaves it no liberty, softens no dislike. But when the understanding

and the affections coincide with these propositions of truth —when every doctrine becomes endeared and every lesson attractive—when esteem is the effect of appreciation, and "faith worketh by love," then the entire soul is gained, and every thought is "captivated to the obedience of Christ." The one process breaks, the other melts, the adamantine heart. The former compels, the latter wins, our conviction. In the first instance, it is the billow chafing the strand, lashing the shore: in the second, it is the ripple of the lake—when dimpled into beauty, and when pulsing with music—spreading itself from the centre in graceful circles, and kissing the flowery margin which rather protects, than restrains, it.

6. The inefficiency of miracle may be explained by an examination of the mind on which it is supposed to operate. Every mind has its tastes, its associations, and its habitudes. Its present nature or disposition is that of the deepest depravity. Men sin not accidentally and artificially. "Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." In any other circumstances they would follow a course as sinful. The evil has its roots in the heart, and let it beat on earth or in hell, it is "desperately wicked." It is set upon it. The only method for its renovation is, that other tastes, associations, and habitudes be introduced. There must be established counteracting tempers and antagonist principles. But miracle is a "sign to them that believe not," and falls *without* them. It cannot, therefore, alter the prevailing bias. By the terror it inspires, by the check it imposes, it may suspend, but cannot destroy, it. The love of sin will be sure to restore its practice, when the powerful restraint, the diverting cause, is removed. Men will "go on in their trespasses;" nor would any external circumstance, however startling and tremendous, radically change, or effectually deter, them. A superficial application cannot reach to a disease whose cancerous fibres strike into the innermost core of the heart.

7. We may conceive, as revelation is a system of pure favour and mercy, of a difference in the extent of its evidence. To those who desire a larger sum, we may suggest there might be less. And time was, when its present amplitude was much circumscribed. Yet, even then, men were required to embrace it. It was most reasonable for them to receive it as credible as important. What we may denominate the present excess, is therefore the effect of gratuitous favour. It is more than is demanded by the strictest exigencies of the case. Perhaps those who anticipated our period, asked the precise addition for their satisfaction which we now enjoy. It is the differential amount. And does not this prove, and should not this establish, that the argument of truth has always sufficed to convince, that the exhibition of truth has always been competent to impress, and that miracles, more or less numerous—*the fact of a Divine interposition and sanction being once settled*—would leave mankind without any perceptible or conscious difference in their moral state and religious tendency?

8. However men may lay the burden of their unbelief on the scarcity and defectiveness of proof, we cannot doubt that there is wanting, on *their part*, what no mere proof can supply. They are not debarred by the fastidiousness or vigour of the reasoning faculty—by the peculiar turn of intellect, by the cautious habit of research—by being inured to habits of a severe logic and of a rigid demonstration. It is *impression* of which they stand in need. They have never duly weighed the subject. They have never assumed, for a moment, its results. They have never put, even on a supposition, its consequences, should they be confirmed. Their conduct is imprinted with egregious trifling. Seriousness they disclaim and despise. Other susceptibilities, before they commence their study of the evidence, must be awakened. It is not the ray that is wanted to dart on their reason, it is the lightning

to strike and pierce their conscience. And men but hypocritically or self-deceivedly assert their readiness to acquiesce in the claims of revelation, when they have never met its advances with common respect, nor listened to its statements with ordinary excitement.

Nor do we reason alone on general principles, we possess an abundance of facts. Miracle has been repeatedly tried, and, as a means of conversion, it has repeatedly failed. Did the translation of Enoch excite the repentance which might arrest "the end of all flesh?" Did not the heart of Pharaoh seem to encrust with growing obduracy, as plague fell upon his land after plague, and judgment followed judgment? Did not the Israelites defile themselves with idolatry at the very base, and within the very shadow, of Sinai? Hasten onward to the days of our Lord. The mighty works which he did were too numerous to be told, and too splendid to be concealed. The blind saw Him who was "fairer than the children of men;" the deaf heard the "grace which was poured into his lips;" the dumb sang his praise; the halt speeded his errand; the demoniac confessed his sway; the leper reflected his will; the dead obeyed his call. And yet He "laboured in vain, He spent his strength for nought and in vain." Was it imagined that if "one rose from the dead," the task of persuasion would be perfected? Did the lost spirit of the rich man pray that Abraham would send "Lazarus to his father's house and five brethren?" One of that very name was the subject of the desired miracle. It was wrought with great publicity, with deliberate announcement, and, if the phrase may be allowed, with scenic effect. The sisters of Bethany are immersed in grief: their bereavement is the occasion of general sympathy: the interment is past; the body has yielded to its law of corruption. And now He, who hath the keys of death, approaches the closed tomb, and, with a voice which pierces its recess and defies its power, he cries, "Lazarus

come forth." The mandate is heard, the captive is rescued, the multitude is awed, and the distracted "women received their dead raised to life again!" Could it be believed that one of the first consultations of the Chief Priests and Pharisees was how to destroy "the Resurrection and the Life," who, they admitted, "did many miracles;" and how they might "put" the recently extricated victim of the tomb "also to death?" But one more experiment shall be made—another shall force the territory, and overcome the power, of death. It shall be seen in the person, it shall be achieved by the might, of Jesus. He has "saved others,"—and has been taunted that "himself he could not save." He "lays down his life." The pale ensigns of mortality cover his body and fill his grave. He rises! He lives! He has overcome! He, who entered the gates of death a warrior, comes back from them a victor! He confirms the doctrine of immortality. He "brings to light, life and incorruption." He establishes his identity by "many infallible proofs." Upon this one issue all had been rested. He had assured his friends and his adversaries that he would rise again on the third day. A recollection of this induced every precaution. Every precaution is vanquished—the watch, the seal, and the stone. The fact is undenied. Yet, could they have once more enacted the tragedy of Calvary, their thirst for his blood would have urged them: and now that their malice can reach no further, they invent a pitiful slander against his followers, and menace them first, and immediately execute it on their defiance of it, should they "speak any more in his name."

And, indeed, there exists another form of objection: it regards the texture of the revelation *itself*. It can transfer the charge from the *evidence* to the *shape*. It is contended that it might have been composed on a fitter model, and in a more transparent style. There is a demand for more explicit definition, more fixed termin-

ology, more consequential reasoning. To this we reply that Scripture was written on certain principles. The *first* was to exercise the mind—in comparing the whole, in developing the spirit, in drawing the inference: its meaning is clear, but it is not presented in rudiments, propositions, and axioms. It is to be sought, to be digested, to be systematized. However technicalities are avoided, there is a "proportion of faith."—The *second* is, to be a perpetual *test* to our state of disposition. To the pure, to the meek, to the upright, to the docile, to the humble, it shows its truth. These "see it," "taste it," and have "all riches of the full assurance of understanding." No dimness pervades Divine revelation; the "light that is in us is darkness:" no veil is upon it; it is "upon our heart." And so long as "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God," no argument could prove them to his judgment, no language could simplify them to his apprehension, no recommendation could endear them to his heart.

And let us remember that often as this excuse has been alleged, this plea adopted,—it was never heard by Heaven but to be disowned and refused. And that surrounded by all the information, and possessed of all the warning, which shall ever be imparted to us, it becomes us now to decide. In vain we wait for another economy of things. In vain we ask for a more auspicious era. "There shall be no sign given." "The dispensation of the fulness of times" has evolved the last truth, and counsel, and hope. And now eternity unfolds its motive to urge our decision. There is a disclosure of heaven and hell.—*The term for prayer is short.* This is a duty at least as important as that of intelligent conviction. Yet has it no scope in the place of torment. It can only ascend to Abraham's bosom to be rejected. It may expostulate, but it is beaten back upon the suppliant wretch. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is

near." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."—*There is no term to retribution.* "The great gulf is fixed." Some may speak of the disciplinary flame. They may point their unhappy proselytes to the pit, as only a longer and rougher path to heaven. They may describe the misery of the lost as curative and salutary. But how have they learnt to solve the difficulty which he, who "was called the friend of God," confessed? or contrived to throw the crossway over the abyss, impassable to spirits which might attempt the flight to soothe the lost, or escape to the blest?

Oh, it is plainly, incontrovertibly true, that we all sin, and all disbelieve, against declarations more pointed, against facts more stupendous, than any miracles. It is certain that nothing preternatural could conquer the apathy and the malignity which these cannot subdue. "We have a more sure word" of testimony than the gorgeous vision of "the holy mount." What could arouse, what impress, what soften, us, if we can hear that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," without rapt attention and bleeding emotion; if we can gaze on "Jesus, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come," without a weeping eye and a breaking heart? These are the higher wonders which men resist; the spectacles of merciful power, of unalterable love, which they withstand. He, who was "in the bosom of the Father," has tabernacled on an earth which was "made by him and for him," and was "God manifest in the flesh." The nature He assumed was the awful device and instrument for a sacrifice, which received all the merits, and developed all the purposes, of the Indwelling Divinity. He went down into the state of death: though the "Living Being, he was dead:" He rose from the grave, and bore our nature and our cause with him, not only as the subject of his advocacy and government, but as an essential of his Person, and the crown of his Glory. It were easy, after evading

and opposing these truths, to deride the most dazzling sign, and mock the most solemn voice, of the Almighty—to "run upon him, even upon the thick bosses of his bucklers." *Now* this conduct may find some apologist, and shelter itself in some pretext! *Now* it may be thought a honourable candour, if some doubter shall exclaim "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" *Now* it may seem no insolence to assert, that the religion which four thousand years were required to reveal, only failed to convince,—that the sentiments, with which it was greeted, only fell short of a conviction that it was true,—and that the creature, to whom it was addressed, did all but embrace it! But *then,* when all hearts are exposed—but *then,* when all men are arraigned, unbelief shall stand recorded and accursed, as the blasphemy of rebellion, as the extravagance of infatuation, as the madness of folly! No palliative will then occur, no sophism then flatter! "They shall proceed no further!"

Your faith, your obedience, are at this moment demanded upon substantive grounds, upon all-interesting reasons: you have the complement of evidence, and the accumulation of impression: justice dictates nothing superadded, and mercy asks no more! Therefore, "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

SERMON IV.

THE TRANSCENDENT LOVE OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS iii. 19.

AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.

THERE is a species of rhetorical exaggeration, a kind of hyberpole, which does not mislead. It being most obviously, if not professedly, an overstatement, we are fully on our guard: the glare of its high and undue colouring precludes all fear and hazard of deception. Like irony, it limits and corrects itself. The Scripture does not disdain the use of this figure. "The Lord answered Job and said, Behold now behemoth, he drinketh up a river and hasteth not; he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." "And there are also," declares the Evangelist John, "many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." In all such cases, though the truth is not literally observed, it is virtually maintained; and the excess of language, which cannot be strictly and formally justified, yields that strength of meaning, and impresses that force of feeling, which it was the original purpose to convey at once with the greatest emphasis and sincerity. Poetry owes to this privilege its deepest charm and most costly embellishment.

But *this*, in some instances, is an inconvenient and unsuitable style. It should not at any time be employed, but with the caution of a sound judgment and delicate taste; while it ought to be restricted to occasions, and expended upon themes, which by their sublimity, demand the exercise of imagination, and, by their peculiarity, destroy the pretext of mistake.

Definition requires to be clothed in the most sober language. Its parts must be well weighed, and its expressions be sedate and subdued. Here is no room for flights of fancy and speculations of opinion; all should be guarded and measured; the thought explicit, the phrase distinct. The precision cannot be too strict,—the forbearance, from all verbal display and mastery, too rigid.

It may be that *circumstances* exist which would render this a *dangerous* property and turn of speech. When the *feeling* is already high, and the *temperament* impassioned, loose and incautious epithets may kindle a destructive flame. A sufficient capability of excitement, and quickness of feeling, may now be discovered; it rather needs restraint than stimulus, corrective than incentive. Temperance of statement and argumentation is demanded by the severe fidelity of truth, and by the just interest of those whom it addresses. Let the manner be less plain and perspicuous, and both will be compromised.

And this elevated and ambitious diction may, in certain connections, border upon profanity. Its indulgence is intolerable in *the exercises of devotion*. When we "worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker," our language should be distinguished by a modest reserve and a chastened awe; our spirit should be disciplined into a settled earnestness, and a child-like simplicity. The "words should be few and well chosen."

But our text is, to every intent, a *definition*, and one of the most exact. The writer having asserted what might be misunderstood, subjoins an explanatory member to the

sentence. As if there had been in that sentence something unfixed and ambiguous, he recalls it, that he may give it more clearness and decision. That which passes in his mind is easily elicited: the very association of ideas is immediately traced. To know the love of Christ! *Know* the love of Christ? It *passeth knowledge!* Nor is it unimportant to examine the nature of this sudden check. It is generally more proper to abate, than strengthen our descriptions. Reflection brings with it a qualifying power. What we have spoken in haste and in the transport of feeling, we must often lower and allay. It is rare that we deem it necessary to throw into it more feeling. But this inspired author, instead of attempering his representation, proceeds in the opposite course. Nay, even in his anxiety to aggrandize the love of Jesus Christ, he submits to the charge of a retraction, and the semblance of a paradox.

And it was directed to those who felt themselves laid under *immense obligations* to the Saviour of mankind. It is noted by the sacred historian, that among them "the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."* There was, consequently, no occasion to vanquish debasing views of his character and work, by vivid, energetic composition. There was no hesitating confidence to reinforce, no "smoking flax" to revive and fan. There was ardour, even to intensity, of emotion. If it was possible for them to go too far, if there was any danger of extravagance in the feeling and utterance of their gratitude, if there was the faintest risk of this gratitude interfering with the *first* of all claims, the *highest* of all duties, long since should a precaution have been suggested, and an alterative been applied! A determinate, and not an inflated, language was imperatively needed. Such hearts were too susceptible to sit in judgment on the accuracy of terms, or to calm down the tone and throbbing of the passions.

* Acts xix. 17.

And this was the *prayer of the Apostle's heart.* He bowed the knee. There was agreement between his desire and his gesture; and nothing can be more indicative of declared devotion. All but truth and sincerity fled from his recollections. He gave no flattering title: he entertained no double sense. That was not an exercise, that was not an attitude, in which to dissemble—to array any subject with a false importance, to invest any being with an unmerited claim.

Yet Paul, whose words are always the "words of truth and soberness"—who had received the Gospel by revelation, who had been caught up into the third heaven, to whom to "live was Christ," who did but "one thing to apprehend that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus,"—this chief of the Apostles—when staidly adjudging, and scrupulously defining, the nature and extent of the Redeemer's mercy towards us; when summoning hearts, the most susceptible and enflamed, to contemplate it; when pouring forth his supplication to Him who "desireth truth in the inward parts;" deliberately and solemnly—not in the collision of a debate, but in the weighed matter of a composition, and in the frank confidence of an epistle—pronounces it a "*love which passeth knowledge.*"

But can any thing be more rash and unfitting than such an encomium, if Jesus of Nazareth be the naturally human being, born of ordinary parentage, found in common descent, the son of Joseph and Mary, capable of misapplying Scripture, perhaps not faultless in the haunts of private life, addicted to assert opinions which he had not maturely considered, fallible, peccable, ignorant, and weak? According to what fair, just, authorized acceptation, can His love be thus transcendent; or how can it deserve to be celebrated in this lofty style?

I. THIS REPRESENTATION MUST BE CONFIRMED.

We do not regard it as a unwary description, a hapless

slip, not supposing that these are to be found in a volume "profitable for doctrine" and "written for our learning." We have devised no method, we have acquired no art, of appeal from "the words of the Holy Ghost."

One thing is plain: that the love cannot "pass knowledge," the motive of which may be conceived. If we can enter into the motive, all its best and largest consequences may be understood. The patriot, the philanthropist, the martyr—however bright their fame and great their deeds—in the main outlines of their character, and chief springs of their conduct, may be readily appreciated. If we have ever loved our country, our kind, our faith—if we can realize these exercises of love—we have clews to their most renowned virtue, and keys to their most cherished sensibility. The recess of the mind, the working of the heart, is laid open.

The incomprehensible degree of this love to men, must be in its *infinite* motive! Nor can we abate our belief, nor recant our profession, of *mysteries*, which, by drawing it from the very bosom of Deity, give us a place among its awful affections.

1. *This love is most strictly Divine.*

The benevolence of a creature to his fellow must be *finite;* must be regulated by the standard of *self-love;* can have nothing in it *independent* or *self-controlled.* The passions of any being must be limited by its nature—and the heart is only capable of a particular excitement. Human capacity cannot be infused with divine emotion. Nor is it possible for any being to love another better than himself; for created nature has no higher guide and model than the law of self-love impressed upon it. Thus our constitution as creatures, and the governing principle of all our social feelings, restrict our warmest good-will to a narrow compass. That which is *finite* must be dependant—if matter, physically—accountably, if mind. And, therefore, our love is the subject of duty. But, if it be

the subject of duty, it can have no gratuitous character; and, if no gratuitous character, it can obtain for itself no praise for its inconceivable energy. Properly speaking, there cannot be disinterested love between man and man. *Obligation* destroys not the *freedom* of the act, but it does the imaginary license to perform, or not perform, it. *Sympathy* brings with it a pleasure which secures reward. Our *ultimate salvation* demands this precise evidence of believing principle. Never could such benevolence be exercised without a reference to our *own* personal relation, and never *ought*. And there was one who, after the most lavish sacrifices, and exhausting labours, said "I am a debtor." And we must all remember that we "owe to love one another." To flatter, consequently, these necessarily circumscribed sentiments and acts as "passing knowledge," is egregious trifling, and hollow bombast. No conceit could be too fanciful, no verbiage too turgid, if this description be employed to predicate the compassion of any creature, be he angel or man. The fathomless streamlet! The overpowering splendour of the glow-worm! The cloud-capt elevation of the mole-hill!

We "call Jesus, Lord." Here we know neither sense of shame nor shadow of doubt. If we are sometimes constrained to treat it as a question, and to debate it as a controversy, it is not from a momentary suspicion, a glancing demur. By deep inquiry, somewhat proportioned to this great argument, we have wrought out an untrembling conviction. It is assured as a geometric demonstration, and constant as an intuitive law. We grieve, we blush, to admit any necessity of proving it anew. "My Lord! and my God!" I ask not so much thy favour towards thy creature that he dares to confess Thee before men—he is but thus strong and resolved in Thee!—rather I implore thy pardon for his attempt, which only motive can redeem from the guilt of presumption, to prove that Thou art "God blessed for ever!" It is surely only a less daring

attitude for the man who is "but of yesterday, and knows nothing," to vindicate, than to deny, Thee! Bear with him who, in his weakness but his sincerity too, would persuade all his fellow-beings to love and to adore Thee! Remember that in Thy world—and Thou didst long since "come unto it, and, though made by Thee, it received Thee not"—there are "imaginations to cast down," there are "oppositions of science, falsely so called," to be rebuked, there are those "of the contrary part" to be made "ashamed!" He covets this distinction, this success, more than any crown which even Thou couldst give but that of life, more than any palm which Thou couldst enwreathe, but that of heaven!

Is creation a divine claim? "Without him was not any thing made that was made." Is sustentation a divine act? "By him all things consist." Is universal possession a divine prerogative? "He is Lord of all." Is Scripture-inspiration a divine procedure? "The prophets searched what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." Is the pardon of sin a divine inalienation? "The Son of Man hath power to forgive sins." Is God omniscient? "All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts." Is God omnipresent? "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Is God omnipotent? "I am Alpha and Omega, the Almighty." Is God self-existent? "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Is God eternal? "His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Is God to be beloved? "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." To be obeyed? "Ye serve the Lord Christ." To be trusted? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." To be adored? "Let all the angels of God worship him." No discrimination

is applied, no reserve is intimated; the properly and rightfully *Divine* is attributed to Him in the most unqualified manner, and the most substantial degree. Well may we take His high praises into our mouth, well may we extol and ascribe greatness to Him, well may we give unto Him the glory due unto his name!

Now the inquiry arises, whether the sacred writings, which are so definitive upon the fact of his Deity, ever connect that Deity with the displays of his love? "And his name shall be called Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, *the Prince of Peace.*" "Immanuel, *God with us.*" "Jehovah our *righteousness.*" "Look unto me, and *be ye saved,* all ye ends of the earth, for *I am God,* and there is none else." "Awake, O sword, against my *shepherd,* and against the man that is *my fellow,* saith the Lord of hosts." "*Christ* the *wisdom* of God and the *power* of God." "The Great God, even our *Saviour.*" "*Jesus Christ,* the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." "This is the True God and *eternal life.*"—And we have plain testimony that his love is divine. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." "Hereby perceive we the love, because He"—that is the Eternal Life—"laid down his life for us."*

It follows that all the Divine Perfections must direct and enforce this love. It was, therefore,

Absolute.—The highest angel, the most glowing seraph, has no property in himself. He is made for a peculiar sphere, he is amenable to a peculiar law, he is dependant on a peculiar arrangement of things. He can do nothing that is peremptory and self-devoting: he cannot, at pleasure, select his own station, and assign his own province.

* I. John, iii. 16.

However exalted, he leans but the more on infinite power, and is bound but the more to infinite authority. According to his elevation in the scale, his reliance is full, and his obedience sensitive. But "the love of Christ" soars above these conditions. Sometimes, it is true, He is called the gift of God, even the Father. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." But where is the emphasis of the contrast, where is the munificence of the boon, if that Son was a created being? The Divine Will could have peopled worlds with beings, as fair, as pure, as benevolent. A moment, a mandate, would have sufficed; and the counterpart to the most pre-eminent creature might have stood up in the beauty and splendour of his existence. How is that gift so vast which bestows nothing but what the Supreme Volition, at every moment, might have matched and exceeded? But the economy of redemption, with the respective offices borne in it by the persons of the Godhead, may satisfy us of the true solution. In one sense, He was the gift of God by voluntary condescension and official subordination. But was He not his own? Of irresponsible authority? Of self-determining action? Nothing is more frequently and distinctly indicated :—"Who *gave himself* for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." "Christ also hath loved us, and *given himself* for us an offering and sacrifice to God." "Christ loved the Church and *gave himself* for it." "Who *gave himself* a ransom for all." "Who *gave himself* for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." "Once in the end of the world hath he put away sin by the *sacrifice of himself*." "This he did once when he *offered up himself*." It was in this tone of sovereignty He said, "Lo, I come." It was in pursuance of this self-dedication that He was seen amidst the bowers of Eden, the oaks of Mamre, the pastures of Midian, the clouds of Sinai. Having descended on our earth in our nature, He asserts the same

title: "No one taketh it from me, but I lay my life down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He invariably assigns the same motive: "For this cause came I unto this hour." Without his most unbiassed consent, his most absolute independence, the earthly governor "could have no power," nor was there a liability or obligation to suffering and death by which He could have been constrained. At pleasure He could pass through the infuriate rabble, at pleasure He could make the band, which came to seize him, recoil. He adjusted the scene which he was to fill, and laid the pile on which he was to be offered. All proved a self-disposing power. The fire fell not kindling upon his heart, it was native to it, and, like that beheld by the prophet, "infolding itself."

That which is independent must be underived; but what is underived must have always existed: we therefore, regard this love as

Eternal.—We know no antecedent moment, no previous event, to it. There was never moment nor event which it did not anticipate. "In the beginning was the Word." Of a never-beginning succession we can have no idea: but it suffices us to say, that whatever the dread property can include, it denotes, in its reference, to the love of Christ. We infer the eternity of His love to us, as we do that of the Father to him: "Thou lovedst me before the foundations of the world." "Grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." These are the common expressions for an eternal date: but those more decisive are not withheld. "The eternal purpose was purposed in Christ." Do you know what is this everlasting love? Can you transport yourselves to "the years of the right hand of the Most High?" Can you ascertain a past equal to a future, the two oceans of eternity, joined together by the narrow strait of time, alike broad and deep? From that Ever, what deduction can arithmetic

separate, can imagination suppose? "We know not the numbers thereof."

Infinite intelligence, as necessary to unoriginated, eternal nature—which can be the only source of all reflected knowledge—must have regulated this love. If the plainest methods and implements of husbandry are stated in Scripture to "proceed from the Lord of hosts,"* because all means of human welfare are suggested by the united operations of divine skill and benignity—we may reasonably conclude that our salvation will be conspicuous for its features of glorious contrivance. And it is declared, that "God hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." He, whose "love passeth knowledge," is therefore described as exercising a perfect insight into our nature, and comprehension of our case. "He is the only Wise God, our Saviour." The Spirit is upon him, "the Spirit of counsel and of quick understanding." He is the "Counseller." He is the "light of the world," and the "life is the light of men." "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." These opened to his view, every sin of man; that view pierced to all the enormity and aggravation of our rebellion; it grasped each difficulty presented by a holy and immutable law, as well as that which arose from the untowardness and enmity of the human heart; it searched the magazine of wrath that must be encountered by him whose arm should bring salvation; it understood the sum of evil to be expiated, and the stress of punishment to be endured. He saw, He hailed, it all. The infinite prospect of his mind gave perfection to all the plans of his love, and ensured the instruments for their accomplishment. And does it not enhance our conceptions of this love, that it explored the way which it traversed; that it estimated the sacrifice which it sustained; and that it beamed forth from "the eyes of the Lord," which are ever vigilant and

* Isaiah, xxviii, 29.

all-penetrating, "running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on our behalf?"

This love is as necessarily *efficient*. "Our Redeemer is mighty." "He has travelled in the greatness of his strength." "He is a horn of salvation." But this power must not be confined to the simple idea of strength: it is moral right. "He hath power to forgive sins." "He is able to save to the uttermost." And we may conceive of omnipotence and infinite authority strengthening the essence, and warranting the exercise, of such compassion. It is "stronger than death." And it is this impression of natural and official qualification in Jesus Christ, which alone can soothe the mind in its remorse of guilt, and dread of punishment. There wants a power of healing, present and direct. That power must be embodied, with a majesty to raise our admiration, and with a tenderness to relieve our fear. When conscience strikes its scorpion-sting into my breast, when my "heart meditates terror," when judgment glares down upon my head, when hell flames up at my feet,—I look around and wistfully seek pity and deliverance. Whither can I fly? Who will plead my cause? To which "of the saints can I turn?" What mortal hand can rescue me? "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Mock not the agony which you cannot abate! Propose not the measures of a gratuitous irritation! Turn not my distraction into scorn! Is that the time to select, for telling me of a fellow creature, whose instruction and example are to form my only grounds of hope? Will that disenchant the "evil sound" which is in mine ear? Will that extract the arrow which rankles barb-deep in my heart? Am I told of some super-human angelic being, who shall undertake for me? Creature, he must be, and therefore cannot be *my* Saviour. No, ye celestial ministers, there is not one of all your shining ranks to whom I would entrust mine immortal soul!

Not all your outstretched hands could support its pressure! Not all your expanded wings could waft it to the skies! None of your host durst take the mystic scroll of redemption, nor even "look thereon!"—Lamb of God!—Thou with the seven-fold vision, and the seven-fold strength!—Thou all perfect, in the midst of the throne, claimant of its glories, and object of its ascriptions!—To Thee I commend my spirit!—Thou only art able to "keep that which I have committed unto Thee against that day!"—The tribute will be just, as the shout will be loud, which shall proclaim over the salvation of the church, the energy of the love which has redeemed it, "Now is come the power of Christ!"

This love must be consistent with *immaculate purity.* "Jesus Christ is the righteous." "He is the Holy and the Just one." "He loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness." Him, the seraphim with the six wings, of old adored as the "thrice holy Jehovah," in "their trinal triplicities on high."* Not one yearning of his pity impaired his complacency in infinite excellence, or his detestation of whatever opposed it. When his commiseration was most exquisite, finding its relief in sighs and tears, it was chastened with all the sentiments and emotions which fill angels with awe, and fiends with despair. The law was within his heart at the moment of its most melting kindness, and expanded to its enlargement, and warmed with its glow. Rectitude and justice there dwelt in the embrace of love and mercy. Holiness was the standard of his grace—grace was the expression of his holiness. He hated not sin the less when He wept over Jerusalem, than when He sent forth his armies to destroy it: He did not compassionate sinners more at the Crucifixion than He will at the Judgment. And, therefore, is a character of reverence to be remarked in all the displays of his love. He is "separate from sinners."

* Spenser.

His ineffable purity is cherished with the infinite endearment He knew when in the bosom of the Father: it enshrines his incarnate person: and all his benevolence smiles through its features, speaks with its lips, and distributes by its hands!

No "variableness is with God, neither shadow of turning:" the love which is *divine* must be *immutable.* A "mother may forget, yet will He not forget." "A brother offended, is harder to be won than a strong city;" but He "sticketh closer than a brother." The Saviour felt no sudden burst of sympathy, and exercises no fickle mercy. "Whom He loves as his own, He loves unto the end." Affliction, falling on our frail bodies and regarded by our unbelieving hearts, may often raise the doubt; but He answers, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Persecution, as it tears the living fibre of our bosom, may seem to justify the fear; but it was beneath these poignant and accumulated tortures that Christian martyrs have always exclaimed, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

And there is in the love of Christ not only a *divine greatness* but a *divine dispensation.* It is that which administers and applies. *He has mercy;* and the phrase conveys the thought of exercise as well as possession. We may conceive of pity in a person who has no power and authority to evince it. But the "Saviour of the body, the church," is the "Head of all principality and power." We, therefore, read of His prerogative in its due course of operation. "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant." "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." "Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is the exclusive province of the Deity: but how can he, who deems this Saviour a mere man, shape his thoughts and feelings in conformity with such language? Christianity, if it could be so interpreted,

must lead us into a thousand snares of impiety and idolatry: commanding us to trust in man, at the moment it assures us that cursed is he who maketh flesh his arm; attracting our love, in a religious sense, to a creature, while it enjoined us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul; exciting sentiments of gratitude and devotion to another, though it informs us that God will not give his glory to him; bidding us pray to him, with the assurance that the Father only heareth prayer; summoning "all men to honour the Son even as they honour the Father," and protesting to each against it—"See thou do it not!"

It is only as this is the love of Deity, that it "passeth knowledge:" and is it not dread and kind as that? Is it not worthy of One "whose righteousness is like the great mountains, whose judgments are a great deep, whose mercy is great above the heavens, whose truth reacheth unto the clouds?" whose "ways are higher than our ways, whose thoughts than our thoughts, as the heavens are higher than the earth?" Should it be alleged that the mercy of the Saviour is of a more softened manner, a more human expression, than that which is ascribed to the Jehovah of Israel, we are prepared to expect it. He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," by his participation of our nature. But it would be easy to select from the descriptions of that love, which none dispute to be properly divine, instances of apparent relenting, tremulousness, indecision, and regret, quite equal to any such appearances in the "Man of sorrows," "the Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which was lost." Where the Supreme is unquestionably the speaker, a tone is often heard of anguish and disappointment—a reference is made to animal organs and human sympathies. These are accommodations to our faculties; and it is a false criticism which supposes that they can detract from the grandeur of the theme itself. And now that Christ the

Lord hath taken on him flesh and blood, let us welcome the new and the fitting portraiture and channel of the love which is invariable and infinite, whatever scope it may adopt. But ah! when we would scan it, do we not "exercise ourselves in matters too high for us?" When angels "desire to look into these things," may they not be "charged with folly?" How overwhelming is the reflection! The love which was concentrated in Jesus, which spake through human tongue, which beamed from human eye, was the same with that whose tender mercies are universally, and unweariedly, diffused—causing the sun to arise and the rain to descend—filling this still beautiful world with sweetness and harmony. It, though here it might seem to command so recent a date and so narrow a sphere, was revolved in "the understanding which is infinite," and in the "thoughts which are very deep;" was laid up in "the counsel which shall stand," and among "the tender mercies and loving-kindnesses which have been ever of old;" was indulged in the heart which "delighteth in mercy." "We beheld His glory: the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

It rests, then, in the *infinite*. No contemplation brings us so near to Him who is invisible. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us." "The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Let our capacities incessantly widen, still it cannot, in their most inconceivable sublimity, be contained by them,—unless the smaller circle can receive the larger, or the creature "find out the Almighty to perfection." Pursue it, it still recedes: approach it, it still grows: calculate it, and it amasses, and swells, its divine riches and supernal glories, still. Like the waters of the prophetic sanctuary it ever deepens,—like the sphere of the material firmament it ever spreads,—like the precious things of the everlasting hills, it is exhaustless in its source, and undecaying in its stability.

Though the transcendence of this love required to be placed on the fact of the Savour's unequivocal divinity, other views assist us in justifying the representation made of it in the text.

2. *Let us consider the objects which it embraced.*

Life has sometimes been sacrificed by man for man. Natural affection has prompted it; and we wonder not when David cries out over his child, "Would God I had died for thee." Moral esteem has, perhaps, been the inducement; and, for "a good man, some might even dare to die." Religious charity could dictate it; and "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." What was the world He visited? What were the creatures for whom He interposed? A theatre of rebellion: a seed of evil doers. So strong was the abhorrence our guilt aroused, that not only the armies of heaven were embattled against us, that not only the whole creation groaned beneath the incumbrance and sacrilege of our crimes, but "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart!"

There is a repellent quality in sin. "It is the abominable thing which God hates." "He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with him." It closes heaven against us. It alienates from us all natures fair and good. It exiles us from each holy sympathy of the universe. It converts every glance of compassion into a treasonable connivance at us. It arms all things for our destruction. Earth would vomit us forth. The stars, in their courses, would fight against us. The treasures of the hail and of the snow would reserve themselves to wither us. The secret place of thunder would volley its fiercest bolts to blast us. We could not turn but there would be an aspect that frowned, and a hand lifted up to avenge. No eye would pity. There could be none to help.

And when we are told by Him, whose love we now rehearse, that God sent him not "into the world to condemn

the world," we can form a dread conjecture, though but an obscure idea, of the catastrophe we have been spared. The intimation cannot be mistaken, that this might have proved His commission. Had He appeared among us for the purpose, what must have been the infliction? The heart dies away within us when we attempt to realize it. It is no little pain and difficulty that we experience in a conception of His character and person, so strange to our every present prepossession. Other lineaments must fill His countenance than those of downcast grief and heavenly compassion; other tones must pass His lips than those of sympathy and forgiveness; imagination must reverse the figure to which truth gave more touching beauty still. Behold Him with a tearless eye, and an unrelenting brow! Think of Him as the avenger and destroyer! And, whatever may be the violence that the contrast offers to our most endeared picturings and susceptibilities of mind, the thought must seize the possible case, and sternly pursue it. Let Him have so appeared! It was the moral necessity, the natural order, the simple course, of things! No other arrangement was inevitable, but only this: it must have been, though none other must! His fury would have upheld him! He would merely require to let loose the curses of his law, and the ministers of his wrath, and a world would be consumed, a species would be destroyed,—and the next planetary night, which rested on the sister-orbs, would reveal, in the direction of our globe, one radiant point the less. Like the "lost Pleiad," it might be noticed from afar; but, while its extinction was indifferent to the grandeur of the Maker, and the immensity which He fills with splendour and peoples with being,—the passing away of an atom-dwelling and of an insect-race,—what a dread convulsion would it have been to those who suffered it; and with what cries of horror would they have sunk through the wreck to "go down quick into hell!"

But that which adds greater peculiarity of complexion to "the love of Christ" is, that it was as little *sought* as *deserved.* The guilty parents of mankind are not described to us, sueing for re-admission into the Divine favour. They are not drawn with clasped hands and suppliant knees. They flee! The fugitives hide themselves in the thickets of the garden! It was not *complacency,* which always regards excellence: it was not *relenting,* which always supposes contrition: it was grace acting in opposition to every disgusting quality, and every such quality pertinaciously retained. And its more special objects have often been "the chief of sinners." It has a profusion of munificence. It seeks rather the debtor of five hundred pence than of fifty. It goes after that which is most fatally lost until it finds it. It accepts no richer tribute, than the sinful woman's tears. It asks no more honourable eulogium, than that which escapes the convulsed tongue of the crucified malefactor. It is jealous, lest there should seem too little for it to do: as jealous, lest he "to whom little is forgiven, the same should love little." "And such"—this is the scroll of its worthies, the record of its achievements—"such were some of you!" The Gospel, in which this love is concentrated, is "the glorious Gospel of Christ." No measure of guilt and depravity can exceed its power. No possible objection can exist to its publication among the most vile and obdurate. Among these it selects its "patterns," and "makes up its jewels."

Now, these two reflections must be kept in mind, if we would conclude that the "love of Christ," in fixing itself upon us, "passeth knowledge,"—the *demerit* of *sin,* and His *infinite estrangement from it.* None but an omniscient Being can estimate the evil, the turpitude, the "exceeding sinfulness" of transgression against divine justice, holiness, and love. It is relatively infinite in its character, and absolutely infinite in the duration of its conse-

quences. But He "knew what was in man," and what "proceeded from the heart of man." He pierced the shades which enveloped the self of every character, and the enormity of every crime. And yet "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," was in eternal, essential, opposition to all sin. What must have been its repugnance to contact with this earth, to intercourse with depravity and blasphemy, to the spectacles of callous indifference and unbelief! And when some of this exquisite and awful purity was emitted, it struck to the soul of the spectator with an all-penetrating impression, until he fell down and prayed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" He *knew the full malignity of sin, He loathed it according to its full deserts, and yet He loved sinners!* Can His love be otherwise than inconceivable and infinite? Tell us why He would have mercy upon us,—tell us what is sin in his apprehension,—tell us what is the bite of the worm which never dies,—tell us what is the rage of the fire which is never quenched,—tell us what He endured when He exclaimed, "How long shall I suffer you?"—and then you may sound the depths, and grasp the dimensions, of the Saviour's love. Until then, it rejects inquiry, and baffles investigation: it is wrapt in the mystery "of God, and of the Father, and of Christ:" it merges in "the deep things" which the conscious Spirit of the Deity alone can "search:" and is restricted to the knowledge of Him before whom "hell is naked, and destruction hath no covering," who "holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it."

We will endeavour to make good this representation of the text, by

3. *A reference to the means by which the love of Christ manifested itself.*

We do not invite ourselves, in this distribution of our thoughts, to review some simple, uncostly exercise—a fiat, an utterance of power, a look of pity, a boon of liberality.

The mercies of God are new every morning—they are over all his works: but their communication is easy, unconstrained—the overflow of natural benevolence, the going forth of redundant virtue, emanations and transmissions most spontaneous, the constant beating of the heart, inscribed with the law of kindness, in the bosom of "God, who is Love."

But what a tremendous expense of condescension, debasement, and suffering, will now confound our powers of appreciation!

The fact of His *incarnation* proves that "his love passeth knowledge." Had He been born to the wealth of the universe, still, by any human nativity, He must have "become poor." Had the sceptres and crowns of earth been cast at his feet, in stooping to inhabit it, He must have "made himself of no reputation." What was the "glory which He had with the Father, before the world began?" What was the region "where he was before?" He "humbled himself to behold the things which are done in Heaven:" "He was made flesh, and dwelt among us!" Simile, metaphor, fancy, curiosity, are impertinent in this association; nothing can adorn this unparalleled theme; nothing can aid its expression; let the fact be left in its own dread solemnity, and indefinable majesty!

But this ineffable mystery of the incarnation stands in the order of a *means* to an *end*. Whatever is the result of such an arrangement, must be of surpassing interest. It is adopted, not as an adequate organ of love, but as a necessary preliminary to ulterior measures. "The body is prepared," for "an offering!" He was "made lower than the angels," "for the suffering of death." Our nature must be assumed, that our sin may be resented on it. Our blood must flow through Him, that it may be poured out for our expiation! He descended from heaven to earth, exchanged the visible glory of the God for the most humble form of humanity, to put himself into a sa-

crificing attitude and condition! And, having obtained this capacity, it is more the victim than the priest that He emulates—He bows down to receive, rather than to strike, the blow—unless we combine relations strictly united in Him, and remember that while He lay the palpitating, bleeding Lamb on the altar, He was equally the High Priest who "offered himself without spot unto God."

Behold Him in Gethsemane! His "soul is very sorrowful, even unto death." "He is sore amazed." "The Prince of this world cometh." It is the hour and power of darkness." An invisible hand smites Him! An impalpable cloud of witnesses surrounds Him! A mysterious cup, seen only by himself, rises before Him! He is in "an agony!" His prayers ascend with "strong crying and tears!" The blood starts from each pore, and clots the earth on which He sinks! And yet there is an entire absence of all external agency, of all noxious intrusion—calm is the scene, still is the night—it is the season of tranquillity and rest. The mountain-outline might fill the soul with wonder; the refreshing night-breeze might restore the fevered frame; the kine, stretched on the pasture,—and the bird, cowering in its nest, might soothe the aching heart with images of pleasure; and the soft moonlight glancing through the foliage, or sleeping on the brook, might compose the most distracted memory to peace. Why, then does His bosom heave? Why do the channels of life overflow? Nothing to excite sorrow, nothing to inspire dread, is seen or heard. The struggle is within! What must have been the rending of his heart,—what the tempest which broke over, the gloom which settled upon, His spirit,—which could shatter the organization of His body, and dash Him to the ground! It has been a mental horror—sin, with its odiousness—justice, with its inexorableness, impressed itself upon Him. But what He felt, must remain a secret buried in

His searchless breast. It was but a presage of what He had yet to endure. And now being forewarned, and having foretold, of His death, the dismay of this overshadowing visitation has ceased. He lifts himself up into native majesty. He awakes his slumbering disciples with a voice of well-prepared confidence,—"Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand:" and then interposes between them and the conspirators, as though He had no sorrows and dangers of his own,—"If ye seek Me, let these go their way!"

Behold Him on Calvary! A most marked contrast is exhibited by Him here. We have seen Him weep, when nothing we could observe, justified a tear; we have listened to his groan, when nothing we could trace, warranted a sigh; we have watched with Him as He fell on the face and lay senseless on the ground, when not a blow appeared to strike, nor calamity to befall, Him. It was then He was overwhelmed with depression and despair. But there *is* torture! there *is* shame! Mechanical cruelty, physical violence, corporeal suffering! And yet He exhibits a strange superiority, if not indifference, to the preparations and horrors of his crucifixion. Who heard Him complain, when the thorns were knotted around his head? Who heard Him complain, when ruffian bands voided on his face their foaming rage, their contemptuous rheum? Who heard Him complain, when he stood arrayed in the insignia of mockery? Who heard Him complain, when he bent at the pillar under the lacerations of the scourge? Who heard Him complain, when the outcries of his ungrateful countrymen demanded him for execution? Who heard Him complain, when he sank beneath the transverse of his cross? Who heard Him complain, when the jagged nail was driven into his hands and his feet? Who heard him complain, when the malefactors cast their "scorn into his teeth?" Now are the acute pains, the horrible inflictions, which might ex-

tort fast-flowing tears, deep-heaving lamentations! But it is the crisis of collected wisdom, of collected kindness, of collected power: and while the soldiery is gambling for his vesture, and the populace is deriding his suffering —He remembers that all things concerning him must be fulfilled—He bequeaths his soul-pierced mother—He implores forgiveness from heaven for his murderers—He throws open the gates of Paradise, and disposes of its rewards! But now, from hidden causes, the Death, which He should die, begins. Attendant phenomena declare it. "A voice from the temple" proclaims its awful curtain rent. The shriek of the multitude attests the reeling of the earth beneath their feet. One shadow covers the dial, as though the sun refused to mark by it the progress of the accursed time. And far down the valley of Jehoshaphat, the sheeted dead awake to life, and start to freedom. These are not unmeaning omens. For now the Sufferer, who had not "opened his mouth" for a wail or a reproach —whose calm dignity and forgiving mien, nothing could impair—pours out his bitter complaint. And, "be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid!" —his complaint is not against earth, He pities it!—not against hell, He defies it!—his quivering flesh and bruised spirit break beneath another power,—and his death-cry points that complaint to Heaven, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Why is this? Why must his love to man incur the infinite expense of such a death? Why could it not have found another passage than of grief and blood? "What meaneth the heat of this great anger?"

Sin was the occasion of all. "He bore our iniquities." "He was made sin for us." "He was the end of the law." "He was made a curse for us." "He was cut off not for himself."

Now, to calculate this love, or rather to show that it

exceeds all calculation, the following inquiries must be originated :

—May His death be considered a *strictly personal* act?

By His person, we intend a perfectly incomprehensible union of divine and human natures, "God was manifest in the flesh." Whatever is impossible or untrue of either, in its separate condition, we may affirm to be equally so in its relative one. Deity must be impassive, humanity must be finite and dependent: the first cannot descend to the limitations of the second,—the second cannot be raised into the infinities of the first. In every available sense, and according to every practical influence, we believe "the decease accomplished" by Christ Jesus to possess all the *concurrence* which a personal act requires, and all the *value* which the combined extreme of His properties can impart. These perfections and imperfections, this incapability and susceptibility of suffering, are brought together, and "of twain are made both one," to produce a great, a transcendently meritorious consequence. While the natures are so dissimilar, a fact which the Incarnation prepares us to expect, they are indissolubly blended in design, and in all moral virtue. And thus a happy confusion may be detected in the statements of Scripture, confusion which bespeaks the most solemn confidence and glowing appreciation of the complex mystery to which they relate. "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with his own blood"—that is, of his humanity. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven,"—that is, in respect of his Divinity. And, on equal evidence, we may notice the manifest intention of Scripture to connect his glory, his highest acts and attributes, with his passion and death: "All things were created by Him and for Him . . . and *having made peace through the blood of his cross.*" "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God . . . but humbled

himself, and *became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" "Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, He, by himself, *purged our sins.*" Even Divine agency is supposed in preparing, sustaining, and consummating, the awful action of his oblation; and it is, as it only could be, darkly intimated to us that it was "through the Eternal Spirit He offered up himself:" essential supremacy being necessary to give it self-devoting independence and infinite validity. And, therefore, we discover that other representations of Scripture crown the whole as truly *personal:* "He, *his own self,* bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Think, then, dear Christians, of your Redeemer's agony and crucifixion; at each convulsion, with each wound, remember his proper sphere and majesty; delight in the incongruity and collision of the associations; be not shamed into any course of extenuation. This is the secret of the "mystery of godliness," this is but "the *height* and *depth* of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge!"

—How were his sufferings affected by this *contrast of natures?*

Few are our premises here, and most subdued must be our statements. The manhood was perfect in its rectitude and purity. It was assumed for the purpose of "finishing transgression and making an end of sin." In constitution and motive it was, therefore, a "holy thing." Inconceivably hateful must sin have appeared to all its views and sensibilities. But, (and it is with a trembling reverence that the conception is cherished of Thee who wast "undefiled," and canst "have compassion on the ignorant!") these views and sensibilities were now placed in the highest possible point of advantage and facility for refinement and expansion. We may understand how the closest approach to the Eternal presence illumines and purifies the seraph, bending within its most favoured

circle and most unveiled brightness; but the union of natures, such as the inspired volume announces, can have no analogy, and, therefore, no description. The necessity of the dread arrangement, however, is, that whatever could suffer, (and inconsiderable were the pangs of the body when compared with the anguish of the mind) must have been more deeply pierced, more keenly excruciated, by the contact and affinity of the Purity in whose "sight the heavens are not clean." If you can imagine sin concentrated to the eye that most loathes it, and avenged upon the heart that most abhors it; if you can add, to this imagination, such lights filling the understanding, such depressions saddening the spirit, as immediate revelations from the proximate Godhead must produce, when directed to expose and resent "the sin of the world,"—then, instead of finding in the circumstances and adjuncts of his death any assuagement and relief, you will confess that they were calculated and employed to give it a bitterness, a dejection, a horror all its own!

O what love is this, which every reflection enlarges by confirming the pains it endured, the sufferings which, with every possible aggravation and increase, it welcomed! How it "passeth knowledge!" Thinkest thou, that thou canst conceive it? Thinkest thou, that thou canst bring it down to the level of thy puny capacity? First "measure the waters in the hollow of thy hand, and mete out heaven with a span, and comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure, and weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance." These are but *finite things and proportions,* the "love of Christ" is *infinite!*

This pre-eminence of the Saviour's love to man may be authorized by considering

4. *The blessings which it secures.*

The salvation which the Gospel announces, concerns beings so endangered and issues so awful, that all description is unattempted by the inspired book itself. It tells

us that "God *so* loved the world," it speaks of the "*so* great salvation." Here we must take up the emphasis; but what is our hope, or must be our chance, of success, when that highest authority will, and that highest wisdom can, reveal to us nothing more? This we know, that all which affects or inheres in our sinful nature, the Gospel of salvation perceives and counteracts, putting us into such a condition of impunity that we may say, "Who is he that condemneth?" and pouring such a new nature into us, that we may equally exclaim, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Expressions of wonder are strewn through it, obviously designed to awaken corresponding emotions: "the mystery of the Gospel," "the mystery of faith," "his marvellous light," "his unspeakable gift," "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Think upon the *human soul!* How precious is its redemption! How irretrievable is its loss! A world would not ransom the one, a world not compensate the other! That soul is to be "saved from death." And if its capabilities be so great that we cannot limit them, if endless joy or endless woe must be its inheritance, how shall we comprehend that love which wrested it from "the power of darkness," delivered it from "the pit of destruction," made it a care and a prize, set itself upon it, sought it with every lure, caressed it with every endearment, went "after it until it found it," constituted it "all glorious within," reared for it "a building eternal in the heavens," still is "preparing mansions for it," raises its hand forever to shield it, lights up its smile forever to bless it, and binds itself with an oath forever to assure it? One present blessing of this love "passeth all understanding:"* what must be that train of bestowments of which Heaven is but the name, and Eternity but the prolongation?

Now, in connexion with this "great and everlasting

* Philip. iv. 9.

salvation," the Son of God bears peculiar titles. He is "the Captain of salvation," he is "the Prince and Saviour,"—terms almost incongruous, until we recall the words of the Patriarch, "I sat as chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners." He is a *prophet:* his only lesson being, "Learn of me and I will give you rest," and his only rebuke, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." He is a *priest:* his altar and his victim being his very self, and his intercession the continued voice of "his sprinkled blood." He is a *king,* ruling by the law of liberty, while his royalties, his "rod and staff, comfort us." And what are these but the varied indications and forms of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?" And, when all metaphors are crowded into view and pressed into illustration, when we are summoned to behold in Jesus the fruitfulness of the vine, the effulgence of the sun, the serenity of the star, the costliness of the gem, the firmness of the rock, the security of the foundation, the nourishment of the food, the peacefulness of the refuge, the rallying of the ensign: when we are invited to recognize in Him the knowledge of the Teacher, the experience of the Guide, the skill of the Physician, the fidelity of the Witness, the joy of the Bridegroom, the scrutiny of the Refiner, the care of the Shepherd, the obligation of the Surety, the welcome of the Forerunner,—what is it but that thought tires, but that fancy sinks, but that language fails,—what is it but a confession borne by all things of their poverty to signify, their inferiority to express, this love? that it cannot be told? that it passeth knowledge?

There are two discrepant courses of thought which we must pursue, before we make any approach towards the infinite meaning of our theme. Could we unbar the gates of hell, could we pierce its outer darkness, could we explore its burning lake, could we hear its shrieks which fall back in the mockery of echo on those who utter them,

could we see the wreaths of the sulphureous smoke which ascends up from the tormenting flame, could we learn one fang of their remorse, and one chill of their despair, . . . could we loose the portal of heaven, could we sustain its empyrean blaze, could we trace its living river, could we listen to the anthems which reverberate in the unison of attuned hearts, could we gaze upon the cloud of incense, of which each bosom is a censer, and each feeling is an ingredient, could we learn one sentiment of their contemplation, and one pulse of their ecstacy,—then might we begin to understand, and venture to speak of, that love which has reached to the world above, and stooped to the world below,—whose *height* is more exalted than the highest heaven,—whose *depth* is more searching than the lowest hell,—whose *breadth* expatiates over an infinite field,—whose *length* runs into an eternal duration.

Yes, this love is like Him who is "the Wonderful,"—and as "no one knoweth who the Son is but the Father," so it is equally incomprehensible with his person, and consists only with infinite intelligence. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for *us;* it is high; *we* cannot attain unto it." Time would fail to open new springs of admiration. The love of which we speak is the great impulse and direction of all those powers and operations which fill the universe. "It sweetly ordereth all things." For this the series of dispensations was projected, for this the destiny of empires was controlled, for this the tide of ages was accelerated, for this the system of worlds was reared. Forever was the foundation of this mercy laid, and it shall be built up forever. What a receding eternity conceived, an advancing eternity shall revolve. Stretching itself from everlasting to everlasting, it secures to us "everlasting consolation" and "eternal redemption!"

O, unexampled love!
Love no where to be found—LESS THAN DIVINE.*

* Milton.

But is the result of all this immensity and majesty of benevolence a confusion, an overpowering prostration of the soul—leaving it nothing intelligent, definite, and distinct? It illuminates as well as warms; arouses the mind to its fullest activity, as well as draws out the heart in its fullest strength. And thus the text speaks of "knowing the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." It remains, therefore, that we inquire into

II. THE PERCEPTION WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MAY ACQUIRE OF THIS LOVE, NOTWITHSTANDING ITS DIVINE INFINITUDE.

The sullen indifference, the strange perverseness, of the human mind towards the Saviour's character and mission is strongly marked in Scripture: "The darkness comprehendeth it not." All just estimation of his person, all appropriate conception of his work, are traced by it to a preternatural source: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the *knowledge of Him.*" "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." And the present writer is overwhelmed by the recollection that this discovery had been imparted to him: "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, to *reveal his Son in me!*"

The Scripture equally exhibits the pre-eminent value of such super-human information: "I determined not to *know* any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, even the Crucified one." "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ Jesus my Lord." "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

And it is always assumed that this knowledge is distinctive of the genuine believer; that it is an appeal to which he must respond, and a conviction which he must obey: "Ye *know* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Ye *know* that He was manifested to take away our sins." "We *know* him that is true, even Jesus Christ."

We will, therefore, inquire into the experimental sense, and the practical use, of this internal perception, as the Christian cherishes and employs it.

1. *It is the great interpreting principle which he applies to all the tremendous facts of Redemption.*

Most mysterious is it plan, most mysterious is its apparatus. Detach or combine the arrangements and courses of action supposed, seize the vast outline or the supplementary part, pursue the means or the ends, and we become mute with astonishment, transfixed with awe. The extremes of bliss and sorrow, of wealth and destitution, of grandeur and meanness, unite in the person of the "Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us." The death of "the man Christ Jesus," subsisting in perfect union with the Nature "eternal, immortal, invisible,"—still more confounds us. What a prodigality of expense, what a contradiction of laws, what a derangement of tendencies, was this! What a contrast to all that eye had seen, or ear heard, or that entered into the heart of man! How the mind, in endeavouring to dwell upon it, is hurried through its little range of sympathies and hopes, conflicting with its aversions and terrors, until it is bewildered, distracted, lost! They are, and can only be, the absolute suggestions of revelation. It is no shadow of natural religion which is now bodied. It is no light of human reason which is now deciphered. The authority, the veracity, the reasonableness of the stupendous scheme rest upon grounds exclusively and peremptorily its own. This "righteousness of God is revealed,"—"God hath revealed these things to us by his Spirit," and they can only be "spiritually discerned." And, therefore, unbelievers esteem "these things foolishness." The rabble-shout proclaims the prejudices of our school-men and wits: "If thou be the Christ, come down from the cross." The improbability that such a Person should be constituted, that such a Person should die, is

set up against the most solemn and repeated declarations of that volume, which alone could inform, or ought to convince, us. The Christian feels that all is marvellous, perplexing, incredible, but for one solution. Whence all this, which staggers thought, which convulses feeling? "To know the love of Christ," is to possess the reply. *Therefore* He assumed such abasement; *therefore* He stooped so low; *therefore* He submitted to death so bitter and so strange. It was His *love* which endured the cross, and despised the shame. It is His *love* that sheds its own soft piercing light over the dread profound. We look into the very heart in which all originates. We discover the actual bias which brought Him from heaven to earth. We feel the throb itself which went beating on beyond the power of the spear to stop it; which, unlike his human nature, could never die, and still beats on with the power of an endless life. We recognize, however solemn the glimpse, the movement of Infinite Compassion in all the mediums of human expression,—to the yearning, to the groan, to the tear. And then it is that Calvary becomes "a mount that might be touched," and is invested with no less of tender attraction than of tremulous awe. He who "loveth righteousness," and He who "resteth in love," is equally there. The "goodness and the severity of God," have a common work, and stand in an equal fellowship. If holiness demand a sacrifice, love provides a victim: if justice unsheath the sword, love receives the blow. The "love which passeth knowledge," is ascendant among all those "fearful sights and strange signs." The tokens above, and beneath, are "for good." Love speaks above every voice, and love is transparent through every shade. It is not so much the frown of the Divine countenance which darkens the sun, as the light of that countenance which outshines it. Does the veil rend? "The way into the holiest of all is made manifest." Do the dead arise? "Awake and sing,

ye who dwell in the dust." And if at last, His death should seem to require an unmingled act of rigour and retribution,—"mercy rejoiceth," for while vengeance raises its weapon, the bosom of "surpassing love" opens and presents itself—invites, hastens, closes with, falls upon, its point!—What mystery remains if you explain it by his love? Ah, little have we succeeded in "knowing the love which passeth knowledge!" It is but the substitution of one difficulty for another! Love *can* explain his conduct: what can explain his *love?* But it is a happy pause to which we are reduced: "the great love wherewith He loved us" is our only embarrassment. "The everlasting arms are round about us," and our intricacy is in their embrace. This only do we, will we, know—that Christ "hath loved us, and given himself for us." We dare ask no further, we can learn no more! We cling to the hem of his garment, we turn to the face of infinite beauty, we dwell upon the love which is spontaneous as it is inexhaustible—until its thought is too intense, and its influence becomes oppressive—and we exclaim, "Turn away thine eyes from us, for they have overcome us!"—But the Christian "knows the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," as it is

2. *The sacred element and incentive of all piety.*

The general placability and amiableness of Jesus does not touch the soul with any quickening or transforming power. But when this love is appropriated, when, upon unfailing testimony, I infer that I am a peculiar object of it, when I may conclude that my "name is in the Lamb's book of life," that his dying heart cherished the thought of my case, and wore the image of my destiny,—then I am "a new creature,"—"I love Him who first loved me!" Until then his universal love seemed to have no individual reference. Amidst all its opulence, I was not rich: amidst all its blessedness, I was not happy. In vain I was told that "He tasted death for every man." I then thought

of "sons of perdition"—men for whom it would be "better that they never had been born." But when this love of Christ is *applied*, including my history, entering into my situation, then my "captivity is turned," then "the new song is in my mouth,"—"He sent from above; He took me; He drew me out of many waters; He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me because he delighted in me." And though now the avowal of this personal experience will subject us to the censure and scoffing of the world, the Hosanna of the grateful heart and the confessing tongue must please Him to whom it is raised: "The Master" knows that "we cannot hold our peace," nor will he be induced "to rebuke his disciples." And soon shall He gather his flock, and declare his spouse, the church: and already has promised to it the most signal proof of his love in the homage of its enemies: "Behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

The Christian is *united to Christ* vitally as well as mystically. "Know ye not your own selves how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you the hope of glory." As an effect of this union, His love becomes

—*The theme of contemplation.* The soul receives it into its most honoured recesses, and lays it up among its most treasured delights. "The meditation is sweet." "While we muse the fire burns." Many a vision does it swell!—many a transport does it awaken!—many a song does it attune! "Whom, not having seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And He "who is our life," our present "hope," our eternal "all," shall "come again"—and then how shall He "be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them who believe!" His love is also, in the believer's esteem,

—*The ground of confidence.* "Ye *know* that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." "I know my sheep, and am *known* of mine." The Christian lives in the spirit of self-renouncement. He will only "glory in the Lord." His former phantasies of merit and of right are all trodden under foot. He has "no confidence in the flesh." His rejoicing is, that "it is Christ who died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Well may he be "strong in Christ Jesus," "trust and not be afraid," since "from His fulness he receives," since "he is ever coming to him as a living stone." He is "not ashamed, for he *knows* in whom he has believed!"—And this "love which passeth knowledge" is still further a subject of believing perception, as it is

—*The motive of obedience.* "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus *judge* that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." "Hereby do we know that we *know* Him if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And this apprehension of the Saviour is essential to all religion. "Grow in grace, and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Until we all come in the unity of the faith and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The believer "knows the love of Christ," as it is

3. The impulse and model of all benevolence and zeal.

"Herein is our love made perfect, because as he is, so are we in this world." We "mind his things." We make

his cause our own. We carry on his work. Our business and our delight is to "make manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place." This we must experience ourselves, in order to communicate to others. Then may we say, "Know the Lord." And who have been the men to bless the world? To break the yoke of oppression? To pour around them the day of science and of peace? They who could answer, "Thou knowest that I love Thee!" They who could avow, "For us to live is Christ." His example was their study, his love was their zeal. They were not to be likened to the lens which can kindle a distant flame by the sunbeam transmitted through it while its own surface continues dark and cold,—but rather to the flower and tree, which first themselves imbibing the heavenly ray, return it in bloom, and odour, and fruit!

Such is the love of Christ, that "it passeth knowledge." Such is the privilege of those who believe in him, that still they "know it." The propositions are equally true, and equally capable of confirmation. And let not man attempt to reduce them, by either debasing the majestic greatness of the one, or equivocating with the experimental secret of the other.

Certain conclusions arise from a review of our investigation into the subject of the text,—alas, how inferior to it, how unworthy of it!

1. *It is only natural to expect a transcendent character in Christianity.*

The feeling is justified and encouraged by everything in it. "That," said the Saviour, "ye may marvel." Its long continued history, its prologues, its harbingers, its miracles,—its subordination of all events, its impression upon all ages,—the songs of heaven saluting it, the howlings of hell deprecating it, prepare us for what is vast and awful. But were a *creature* its principal personage, and a *creature's* love its capital theme,—did it demand the admiration of the universe to a human child's birth, and a

mortal man's death,—what words could speak the sudden descent of towering thought, the abortive consummation of mighty arrangement, the bitter disappointment and mockery of eager hope? Such a result, after such a preliminary! Such an explanation, after such a summons! But there are those men who cannot make it sufficiently insignificant and mean. Their ambition is to lower, until they can nullify, it. For their *reason*, nothing can be too cold; for their *taste*, nothing too diminutive; for their *feeling*, nothing too indifferent. They find not a mystery, however the intelligences of the celestial hierarchy may: and deplore the vain excitement of them to whom the Saviour "is precious." We must not deny that their end has been signally attained. Simplicity they have purchased to themselves. They have selected it of the most naked attenuation. They have torn the drapery from the skeleton, and turned the skeleton into a phantom. They have succeeded in extracting from Christianity a creed without doctrine, a code without sanction, a morality without principle, a hope without solace. It is not quite certain that their work is done. Ever and anon they pay a compliment to their own forbearance. There are broken intimations that something more will be accomplished at a favourable conjuncture. What will be their closing scene we dare not guess. In the meantime—only so far as they have yet gone, and with all their considerate reserve and self-restraint—"the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

2. *No better test exists of what is genuine Christianity than the level of the views which it exhibits concerning the person and work of Christ, and the tone of the affections which it encourages towards him.*

It is unnecessary to enter into any proof that Scripture labours to exalt, and to sublimate, in this connexion, all our sentiments of confidence, regard, and adoration.

The design goes through its entire tissue. If it be its unguarded style it sanctions a practical error which vitiates the whole. If it be its metaphorical caste, its real meaning is suffocated in the gorgeous pall. *We* believe this volume, in its *inspired sense and style.* And we ask how can we debase the Lord Jesus by its patronage and aid? Does it intend that he was a creature by calling him the Creator? Does it express his limitation of power and knowledge in predicating of him omnipotence and omniscience? Does it denote his accountability by placing the universe before his tribunal throne? Does it restrict him as a being of time, in the assurance that he is the First and the Last? If we err, we err with the only directory of truth,—and "the physician must heal itself." —Or can the Gospel, which we have received "not of *man* but by revelation of Jesus Christ," lend its countenance to his degradation? It leads our thoughts and feelings up one ever-ascending scale, until they lose themselves in the divine and infinite.—Dare we implore the influence of the Holy Spirit to guide and succour us in our attempt? He "glorifies Christ," and the coarsest blasphemy, the most ribald impiety, would shrink from the utterance of such a prayer.—Could christian-fellowship be so employed? Let the Christian meet his brethren in their sweetest communion, their fullest charity: let them approach the table of their Lord: and will that be a welcome scene for contracting each enlarged idea, and quenching each kindled emotion,—for divesting the symbols of all association that could inspire gratitude, and reducing their Founder to such necessary conditions of manhood that he was incapable of condescension, disinterestedness, and of "love that passeth knowledge?" Oh, it is not thus that the Scripture can be tortured, that the Gospel can be contradicted, that the Spirit can be insulted, that the Fellowship of the Church can be prostituted! And the infatuated malignant who sought their co-operation, would quickly

be compelled to answer each: "I took thee to curse him, and behold thou hast blessed him altogether." But while to them who believe "Jesus is honour," the *subject* of the greatest honour, reflecting this honour on all beings and interests related to him, and entrusting this honour to be avowed and vindicated by all who bear his name,—while they never fear that their homage and their gratitude can lead them to any point, or involve them in any danger, of excess,—there are those who give to Christ another rank, and to his religion another construction. Have they well considered the temerity of thus openly counteracting the temper and language of the Inspired Book? Have they no lingering decency with which to veil the outrage? How shall I give it shape and enunciation?————* At the name of Jesus bow not the knee! Call not upon his name! Lift not to him the aspiration of praise and prayer! Guard against the throb of gratitude which might cause you to forget your ultimate obligation! Keep yourself free from the worship of this creature! Watch, lest your love of this your fellowman betray you into extravagancies of personal feeling! Remember that when the inelegant mention is made of his blood, you are merely to think of a virtuous end! Cast out of your mind the remotest thought of any efficacy attaching itself to his death! Exhibit the holy man and faithful martyr as superior to a Socrates, between whom and the Christian prophet a close parallelism of character and suffering may, after all, be very edifyingly pursued! When the first stands in Gabbatha, allow a pre-eminence to him over the other as he stands on Areopagus, though the inequality be but small; not for-

* This paragraph was extracted from the MS. of the sermon into the pages of a recent Controversial Tract. The author hopes he may be pardoned for preserving it in its original place. His reason is, because it has been preached in several instances, and they who heard it might not understand why it was omitted. Some may call it a severe parody on the writers of the Socinian school, *he* knows that it is really a favourable representation.

getting to mark a trifling difference between the poison-cup and the cross! Be rational to the last! When you die be not seduced into the error of the vision-dazzled Stephen, but let your parting prayer be more philosophically composed! Let your spirit, *if you have one*, refuse the heavenly robe which was "made white" in that to which you owe no thankful debt, and which you should never bend to celebrate in song! Accept not the harp which must be struck to the Galilean's praise! Remonstrate with the ten thousand times ten thousands, whose postures and whose strains are so capable of misinterpretation into unholy rites! Denounce the idolatries of heaven!——— If we "*know* the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," we "have not so *learned*" Christ!

3. *There is much of implicit, as well as declarative, evidence, in support of the Saviour's Supreme Divinity.*

In perusing any treatise, of human composition, there are two methods of ascertaining its purport. The first is the more direct, to take the most professed exponent, found in definitions and substantive arguments directed to a certain point. But there is a second. If the author be consistent with himself, even where there is no attempted accuracy, no studied explanation, we may trace an unaffected harmony, an all-pervading spirit. This is the *tenor* of the volume, and no examination can be more just and satisfactory. And we apply this inferential reasoning to the "testimony of Jesus." Nothing can exceed its unequivocal averments. There is "line upon line." "He was God." "He is the great God." "He is the true God." "He is the mighty God." "He is the only wise God." "He is God over all." We know not how terms can be more potential and descriptive. But much is *assumed* What is the *genius* of Scripture? What is that principle of interpretation which falls in with its most easy and unconstrained meaning? What is that explication which, though it is checked by no verbal nicety,

coalesces with the whole? It is this which renders the Word of Truth so analogous in its parts, so uniform in its bearings. We hesitate not to affirm that the one truth—"in Christ Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,"—is the master-key, as it is the understood principle, of all Divine Revelation. And thus, what is most distinctly announced, is most virtually implied, through all its compass and all its detail. And when we believe that the "Son of God is come in the flesh," we have the title, as well as the volume, of the Evidence; the general instruction, as well as the pointed lesson, of the Teacher; the incessant whisper, as well as the sudden burst, of the Oracle; the ordinary radiance of the Urim and the Thummim, as well as their more refulgent syllables!

4. *How necessary is it that we should live habitually under the influence of this transcendent love.*

The early Christians felt no sacrifices dear, no privations painful, no dangers formidable, when "the love, which passeth knowledge," demanded a return.—They were "Christ's!" With hearts soft as the wax to melt, and firm as the adamant to resist, they leapt into the burning pile as into a chariot of fire; the shout which decreed them to the lions, was as the gale on which their spirit stretched its wing towards heaven; and when crucifixion was the cruel award, their joy knew no bounds, because it elevated them to the "fellowship of the Saviour's sufferings, and a conformity to his death." Each point of resemblance was seized; it was a disappointment, if the cord held the distended limb and not the nail; and there the disciple, who would be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord, hung, bleeding, writhing, expiring—the crown of thorns more envied, by the sinking head, than any diadem, and the cross more valued, by the rending heart, than any throne!

Ah! much of deficiency, of languor, of irresolution, have we to deplore! These examples shame us! What

a new view have we to take! and what a higher state of feeling should we cherish! And yet it is a blessed thought, that this "love, which passeth knowledge, may be known;" it is a pleasing hope that we "have known Him who is from the beginning;" it is these reflections which give life its charm, death its sweetness, and immortality its welcome! "It doth not yet appear what we shall be;" yet nothing can now repress our desire, and preclude our right, to sing the strain which the celestial choirs celebrate, and by which we "shall be still praising" Him,—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON V.

INCARNATE DEITY.

Philippians ii. 5, 8.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

We sometimes form ideals of moral beauty—archetypes of more than we have ever realized,—images of wondrous and unattainable excellence. Such thoughts steal over our minds as the most exquisite and fair of all our intellectual creations, and unfold their endless variety with a kind of visioned enchantment. Like shoots of light they come and go: as dreams they gather and melt away. Few would be without these glowing visitations, who have once enjoyed them; and few have enjoyed them without being improved. They form a world of their own, peopled with touching and majestic conceptions, breathing with intense and sublime aspirations. To this we can retreat from the dull and gross repetitions of daily occurrence, we may escape from scenes which embitter and torment. These pictures of the mind not only preserve its sensibilities in their most delicate bloom, but rise upon us either as recollections of some former state, now most unac-

countably obscured; or as the premonitions of another, prepared for us when we pass from this earth and refine from the meaner elements which at present encumber our spirits.

But there is one instance in which all such shadowings of fancy fall short of the original. I speak not now of poet's inferiority to the task. I speak not now of the painter's incapacity for the theme. I speak not now of the abortive attempt of genius and art. It relates not to the spell of numbers, or the delineation of forms. Let the character of Him, whom the text describes, be contemplated. "To whom shall we liken, or shall it be equal?" The noblest thoughts may be raised, the boldest imaginations may be exercised, and yet how most distantly they approach its idea, how most feebly they answer its reality? An undefined remembrance of its outline never strikes us in the manner with which we are occasionally affected, when seeing an object for the first time we cannot overcome the impression that we have been acquainted with it before. But with what resemblances and sympathies is this character to be identified? May it not challenge a perfect uniformity and originality? Where is the mind in which the pattern of it could be revolved and cast? To what prototype does it correspond, and according to which it is fashioned? It is an excellence which originates its own idea, a greatness which creates its own standard, a peculiarity of claims and attributes which circles forever in itself.

This character, as we peruse its record of severe simplicity and unconscious praise, must be regarded in the following manner,—it was embodied in a living being, or is but a lovely fiction; it did or it did not exist. If it did appear as a personal history, it could not belong to an *enthusiast*, since he can have no part in such holy prudence, profound discrimination, and unswerving consistency. And it can as little coalesce with the *impostor*,

because his course must be most abhorrent from this erect independence, this noble purpose, this disinterested meekness, this transparent simplicity, this indefatigable benignity. His religion is thus demonstrably established. But if this character be unreal,—without foundation in truth, never possessing sphere for activity,—there sprung from the mountains of Galilee and the banks of Gennesaret, a marvel of imagination, more sweet and more heroic, than the magic of Greek and Roman poetry ever summoned into being, or moulded into shape.

Though, if it were in our power, it would be most desirable to consider "the mind which was in Christ Jesus" as a *whole*, our faculties necessitate us to detach it into parts: as a sphere of light it overpowers and confounds us, we therefore must dissever and decompose its rays. And it will greatly depend upon the particular inquiry and argument, what may be the point in this assemblage of transcendent qualities to which we advert. Such is its compass, that there is nothing which it cannot illustrate.

The scope of this Apostolic enforcement defines a portion of this character. Humility in condescension, disinterestedness in benevolence, are the properties selected. "Lowliness of mind," generous "looking to the things of others," are urged from their illustration in the temper and conduct of the Saviour. He is pourtrayed as a perfect specimen of these virtues. We are adjured to copy his example, and emulate his course.

It is no objection to the moral reasonableness of the imitation enjoined in the sacred writings, that it often consults and pursues that which is infinite. There is before us, beyond the present opportunity, an eternal career. But for that infinite, the mind would reach a limitation, and then happiness must terminate with progression. We are, therefore, commanded to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect:" to "be holy as He

who hath called us is holy:" to "be followers of God as dear children," Nothing, therefore, could be more rash and ill founded than to allege that the example pressed upon us, in this connexion, must respect a simply finite or human being, because, otherwise, conformity to it would be hopelessly impracticable. It stands in the same rank of fitness and authority with those inspired directions and statements which describe, confessedly, the Supreme as claiming the imitation of his creatures, or stamping his resemblance upon them.

And assuredly, upon the most general survey of the case now cited to us, we shall conclude that Jesus Christ, who sets such a pattern, was more than man, that he existed in another condition previously to the adoption of our own, that the change to which he lowered himself was intended to denote an act and mark a principle of condescension, and that this condescension, to deserve the name, must be voluntary and spontaneous. But the condescension of a creature in not rivalling his Maker, of a responsible creature in becoming a servant, of a mortal creature in submitting to death, is not a very intelligible proposition, nor furnishes a subject very worthy of panegyric. At the first view, to say the least, the representation does not seem the most clear, nor the occasion of pressing it the most happily chosen. Some instance rather more abstinent from daring impiety may be conceived, a deeper degree of self-renunciation might be imagined. In the universal range of human conduct, among the generations of men, among the ornaments and lights of virtue,—a superior portraiture of modesty, of diffidence, of shrinking sensitive withdrawment from notoriety and ostentation, could perhaps be selected. We are not immediately impressed with the sobriety and simplicity of style employed in recommending a person whose conduct had been only negative in its purest pretensions, and in all other respects had yielded to the necessary laws

of his being. There does, on the supposition that a man is anointed as an unparalleled model of forbearance in not presuming to be the Deity, and in acquiescing to be man, seem an effort, elaborate, if not extravagant, in thus emblazoning him. It is somewhat remote from a self-evident truth, why such a man on these grounds, should take precedence of all those spirits who have "walked humbly with their God," A few strokes commonly supply the biography of Scripture,—nothing can be more chaste and inartificial than its ordinary method,—but this, if justifiable at all, would seem of another class,—the detail crowded, and the colour over-charged. Let us remember that this description is affirmed of Him concerning whom it is written, "in his humiliation his judgment was taken away;" who himself said, "I am meek and lowly in mind."

But there were circumstances which required the eulogists of the Saviour, if only man, to be henceforth most rigidly exact in stating his claims. It cannot be forgotten under what charges he was impeached and crucified. He was accused of no less a crime than *blasphemy.* None ventured to adduce it, in the sense of irreverence to the Divine Name, or disobedience to the Divine law. His deep seriousness, his habitual devotion, were too plainly indicated by his temper and conversation to be doubted. He obeyed the temple-trumpet which sounded the hour of prayer. Each festival saw him among the pilgrim-tribes. He spake of the Father with a hallowed awe. The night, spent in devotion, could not conceal its influence from the day. But his countrymen did suppose that his language intimated a near approach to the Infinite Nature; they understood him to assert an equality with it. It was common for him to declare himself the *proper*, the only begotten, Son of God. His mode of describing certain conjoint acts and sentiments between his Father and himself, certainly strengthened the im-

pression. "*We* will come unto him and make *our* abode with him." "That they may be one in *Us*." The supposition that he arrogated to himself Divine honours, instigated his nation to adduce this heavy charge. His conduct, during the trial, did nothing, most assuredly, to dispel it. He asserted the truth of the allegation, upon the oath which was administered to him. The law was very clear: "He that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah shall surely be put to death."* Nothing could outreach his blasphemy *if* he, merely born of woman, presumed to share the Divine essence and throne; if he, "being man, made himself God." And this seemed equally implied in that title which he avowed—*the King of the Jews*. The Highest was emphatically their king. But to Pilate and Caiaphas he alike asserted and maintained that the claim was his. The ascription was conceded to him in scorn; he received, in this character, the mockery of homage; and beneath the unfurled sentence which proclaimed it, he was put to death. There were those who saw danger in this unqualified label of the cross. They would have marked a condition in it, but what "was written was written." If the Son of God did intend nothing that was divine, he had been grossly misconceived. We say nothing now whether his own language had been sufficiently limited. But, according to this hypothesis of exclusive humanity, it became his apostles to be most scrupulous when they "preached Jesus Christ their Lord." An immense evil had arisen from mistake, and mistake founded upon a peculiar style of language. It was time to correct it, and to substitute, for the occasion of it, a stricter course of annotation. The mischief must be repaired. But if our text be an earnest of this revised phraseology, this subdued manner; if this be the way in which the apostles laboured to break down the prejudices of men, as to the received, though mistaken, claims of their Master;

* Levit. xxiv. 16.

if this was the expedient by which they depressed him from an imaginary rank, and contracted his honours within an inferior space; if so they lessened his prerogative, and if thus they abridged his dignity,—then to disabuse mankind is hopeless, and "the last error is worse than the first."

Our embarrassment—if the description in the text be intended to signify that Jesus Christ was nothing more than human, and was furnished specifically to rectify the contrary opinion—is increased by recollecting the character and intention of the apostolic epistles. They were addressed to churches, or believers. They served the purpose of reminding them, of re-assuring them, of confirming them: they offer advice in difficulty, they point the particular application of principle. But they presuppose the profession of the Christian faith. They declare no new doctrine; only urging those to whom they are addressed to "build up themselves on their most holy faith." And if the language, which we now consider, be but a reference to admitted opinion, and a stimulus to cherished piety, then what must have been the conceptions with which it readily cohered, and the affections with which it naturally mingled! What must have been the scheme of faith to which it answered, and the train of feeling into which it could flow! It is but a passing allusion; yet it announces that they who understood and justified it—whose minds could give it their assent, and whose hearts could vibrate their response—were not peculiarly straitened in their sentiments of the Saviour's person, nor exceedingly suspicious of the fervour with which they regarded his mission.

It is, therefore, observable that this allusive style is very cursory, as well as sudden, in the epistles. There is no pause, no faltering—as though the idea would not be caught, or could be disputed. It is always suggested without effort, and enforced without reserve; it is an

approved and welcome thing. A modern writer* has truly remarked of these sacred penmen in their letters, "If they say any thing concerning the person of Christ, it is in an incidental way, and not as if they were introducing any strange and astonishing discovery." The remark proceeds from an avowed opponent of all opinions and sympathies which can exalt and endear the Lord Jesus: but it is critically and religiously just. And we accept and apply it. The language of the text was not a "strange and astonishing discovery." It is "introduced" in an "incidental way." But then how irresistible is the inference, that the views were most elevated which this allusion did not shock, and that the hearts were prepared for every divine sensibility, in which it could strike a perfect chord!

These observations relate to the general structure, the superficial features, of this passage: it is time that we should more closely inspect it.

I. WE ARE DIRECTED TO A STATE IN WHICH THE LORD JESUS SUBSISTED, ANTECEDENTLY TO PARTICULAR ACTS WHICH HE PERFORMED, AND WHICH RENDERS THOSE ACTS SO INTERESTING AND EXTRAORDINARY.

Whenever we think and speak of Deity, we feel our incapability of forming abstract ideas, and employing befitting expressions. And to discussions of the Saviour's divine nature this is often objected. But it equally applies to that which belongs to the first principle of all religion—the being of a God. Still if in that self-existing power and purity, if in that mysterious essence, of which these are but manifestations and attributes, there be nothing that we can fully comprehend or duly explain, are we therefore to forego all reverent inquiry, to suspend all moral exercise, because we cannot "find Him out unto perfection?" The Divinity of Jesus Christ does involve a most ineffable secret, a diversity of persons in the Godhead.

* Belsham.—Calm Enquiry.

We cannot look at the one fact without observing the necessary proof of the other. But such diversity could not, by any previous reasoning or induction, be shown improbable or contradictory, unless each being of finite nature was the standard and mirror of that which is infinite; and unless infinite being was a subject that could be included within human investigations, and shadowed by material analogies. It is vain to set one difficulty against another; but if that be adduced which implies a personal distinction, we contend that it is as explicable as the eternity and underived existence of that nature in which it inheres. It is most foreign to our taste to offer simile and illustration; but we deny the evidence of that simple unity in all finite things which has been affirmed, or that such notions of relation and quantity are inexorably to be transferred to Him whose name is "I am that I am." With the information of Scripture on the "the deep things of God" we resolve to satisfy ourselves; believing that it is not only sufficient for us, but that it is all which God could intelligibly reveal.

It is assumed that Jesus Christ was "in the form of God:" this is the *first* part of the proposition.

The phrase certainly denotes nothing of corporeal subsistence or dimensions. Accidents of this kind cannot attach to Him who "is a Spirit."

It supposes nothing that is necessary to perfect and infinite nature, for it is capable of being excepted and laid aside.—It cannot be divine *claim;* for all that we can understand by the term is inalienable and indefeasible. He "giveth not his glory to another." He "changeth not."—Nor can it be divine *power.* He may cease to exercise it, but not to disallow it. "He fainteth not," nor is it a property optional and variable.—And still less can it be divine *personality.* The language is quite warranted by the inspired notice, "He is the brightness of" the Father's "glory, and the express image of his

person."* Does not this assert not only the person of the the Father, but also—as he is "the express image"—the person of the Son? Does not this assert, by the twofold implication of the term, the distinction to be of a personal character between the Father and the Son? But that cannot be intended here. For from it there could be no descent. And we should be loath, even did not the argument lead us another way, to enter into any dissertation, or attempt at dissertation, on the *modes* of the Infinite Existence. There is "no manner of similitude" intimated in Scripture, and let us not invent one.

God has, however, appeared through certain mediums, and by certain manifestations, to his creatures. It has been in a manner most descriptive. He has bowed the heavens and come down. He has made his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. He has rode upon a cherub, and flown on the wings of the wind. The clouds have been his chariot, and the garniture of the sky has burnished his throne. His voice has been very powerful, and full of majesty. He has lifted himself out of his holy place. He has shown the lighting down of his arm. Men have been afraid of his tokens. The earth has melted. Thus Deity was beheld of old, with a pomp of symbols, and with a grandeur—to adopt the language of poetic criticism—of machines. He was encircled with the Shechinah,—attended by his hosts, and making proclamation of his titles. But sometimes the glory was more attempered, "the manner of the God" was veiled, and "there was the hiding of his power." Such was his style of appearance, indicative, characteristic, incommunicable. "It is as the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." And this outward display we consider to be "the form of God." The proper accompaniments of the Divine presence and manifestation, are the only ideas we can associate with the term in this connection. Nothing

* Heb. i. 3. χαρακτηρ της ὑποστασεως αυτου.

modal in his being and subsistence does he reveal, or can we understand. But as there must be proofs of his particular appearance—for "he is not far from every one of us"—these proofs may justly be designated his *form*, or peculiar manner of exhibiting himself.

But it is impossible to proceed any further without the inquiry, whether He, who is the Father, did ever thus appear? whether His office in the scheme of redemption did not preclude it? The forerunner of Christ thus bare witness of Him: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And, accordingly, the Saviour adds a similar testimony: "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." Though we strive not to know the original distinctiveness of the Son in the Godhead, yet as "the Word who was God," there seems an essential fitness for revealing the Divine Mind, while, by official consecration, he was *sent* and "*anointed* to preach glad tidings."

The facts are these. There did oftentimes appear on earth, to the senses or the thoughts of men, One who could claim each divine prerogative and honour. An example may illustrate, at the same time, the plainest manner and the highest declaration of this awful Visitant. We are expressly informed* that "Jehovah appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre." Three men approach his tent. Two, afterwards called angels, hasten to Sodom; but Abraham "stood yet before Jehovah," who is described as promising the birth of Isaac, and receiving the earnest intercessions of the Patriarch on behalf of the cities so quickly "condemned with an overthrow." And the mysterious narrative is closed by the notice: "Jehovah went his way, as soon as he left communing with Abraham." This example might be easily enlarged: but its authority is decisive. More generally this Being is denominated

* Gen. xviii.—passim.

the *angel* of the Lord: though he appropriates the "great and dreadful name" of Jehovah, speaks in his own right, and suffers the presentation of the strictest worship. He is Jehovah, and yet *sent* of Him,—of Him, personally considered, who "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." But "He and the Father are one." And the angel-relation of Jesus Christ is quite accordant with the Scripture account of him: "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the *messenger* of the covenant."

The conclusion is, in our opinion, inevitable:—The Second Person of the Trinity, in anticipation of his incarnate sojourn upon earth, did frequently, through the interval of four thousand years, alight upon our globe, converse with our race, and renew the pledge of our salvation.

Who walked in Eden when the day of our offending began to decline? It was the Lord God whose voice the fugitives heard, and whose *form* they trembled to behold.

Who spake to Noah, and enjoined him to "prepare an ark to the saving of his house? The Lord gave the commandment, and "the Lord shut him in."

Who was He that, expressing the fervour of Jacob to detain him, and receive his blessing, wrestled with him until the dawn? The triumphant Israel saw "God face to face" at Peniel, as "he found him in Bethel, even the Lord God of hosts."*

Who called unto Moses from the bush wrapped in the unconsuming flame? The angel of the Lord: but he explains himself by the most awful formula: "I am the God of thy father." And again, commissioning his servant to demand of Pharaoh the deliverance of his captive brethren, He adds, "Thus shalt thou say, 'I AM hath sent me unto you.'"

* Hosea xii. 4, 5.

Who "came from Sinai and rose up from Seir?" Who "came with ten thousands of saints?" From whose "right hand went the fiery law?" "The *angel* spake to Moses in the Mount Sinai, and with the fathers."*

Who was "the angel sent before" that people? He was the Lord who looked out of the pillar, who dwelt in the cloud, who could extend or refuse the pardon of iniquity, who required the profoundest homage when he passed through the camp: "Neither let us tempt *Christ*, as they also tempted, and were slain of serpents."†

Who was the Personage descried in the vision of the Hebrew bards? They saw Him "travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save." They heard "the name by which he should be called, Jehovah our righteousness." They beheld "the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven," and obtaining "an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away."

Whether these appearances were more mystical, legislative, transient, permanent, visionary—One Being may be recognized in all. And when we remember that to Him was confided the Jewish church, that He was the source of its inspiration, we can understand how true is his pathetic appeal, "How *often* would I have gathered thee!" since of old he "sent his prophets, rising early and sending them." And in recalling the dread description he had given of his name in Midian, we can perceive how just is his language during "the days of his flesh:" If ye believe not that *I am*, ye shall die in your sins. Even the same that I said unto you from *the beginning*."

Nor is there any kind of manifestation implied in "this form," but of which our Redeemer has availed himself. We may select the more prominent and signal circumstances which say, with infallible distinctness, "Behold your God."

Splendour is the emblem of Deity. "He covereth

* Acts vii. 38. † I. Cor. x. 9.

himself with light as with a garment." "Our God is a consuming fire." "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "A fire devours before him." "There was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness."—So from Sinai did the people hear "the voice" of the Son "out of the midst of the fire." So when the "Lord sat upon the throne high and lifted up," such was the glory that "the house was filled with smoke." So when "the likeness of the firmament was as the colour of the terrible chrystal," "upon the likeness of the throne" He stood, "as the appearance of a man above upon it."

Title is announced whenever the Deity appears. He "passes by and proclaims himself." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." "He is the Living God." "He is the Holy One."—And Christ is "the Lord of glory," the "Living Being,"* and "Prince of Life:" He is the "Adonai and Jehovah:" He is "the thrice holy Lord of hosts:"† He is "Jehovah's Fellow:" nor is there any name and description inalienably divine, but is accorded to him without limit, reserve, and extenuation.

Agency is ascribed to the Deity when he descends to his creatures. He is universally and invariably working in all Nature and by all Providence: He "worketh all in all." He is acknowledged the Creator, Governor, Conservator, Judge.—And Christ is enabled to say, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." "By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." "He is head over all things." "By Him all things consist." "All judgment is committed to Him." "For what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

* Rev. i. 18. † John xii. 41.

Retinue forms an appendage to the revelation of Deity. "Thousand thousands minister to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him." And the seraphim wait the Saviour's bidding, and swell "his train which filleth the temple." And of Him was it foretold, and in Him was it verified, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received received gifts for men." "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."*

Worship is challenged by the Deity, and "Him only should we serve." "The Lord is a jealous God." And yet did the writings of the Old Testament describe the Messiah as deserving and requiring equal honours. They predicted that all "people should serve him," that "all nations should bow down before him," that "daily should he be praised." He, therefore, appropriated all divine rights, and received all divine glories, while upon earth—though it was no part of his mission to reveal his claim, and was a part of his humiliation to shade it. Nor can language be more authoritative than this: "That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

And, during his stay on earth, he gave many a proof that the "form of God" was in his power and at his control; and his awful appearances posterior to his resurrection, shewed that what for a time he had deposed, he now permanently resumed.

In miracle he often "manifested forth his glory." Making bodily cure the seal of forgiveness, he did that which can be done by "God only:" and producing a change in the elements of nature, he constrained spectators to "come and worship, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

By his Transfiguration, a majesty, so to speak, escaped

* Psalm lxviii. 17, &c., compared with Ephes. iv. 8, &c.

him, which he had studiously concealed ; celestial legates waited upon him ; the ancient blaze of the Holiest burnt around him ; his form became radiant and converted into the glory ; and though the vision quickly passed, the impression was not so suddenly effaced from his person ; for, descending from the mount, where the disciples had been "eye-witnesses of his majesty," "straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him, saluted him."

At his Ascension he bent to his purpose every material law, soared by a viewless energy through the regions of mid-air, was seen bearing away "with the clouds of heaven," entered "the everlasting doors," and became reinvested "with the glory which he had with the Father's own self before the world was."

To Stephen He stood disclosed "standing on the right hand of God :" the brightness of the scene kindled the martyr's fading eye, and cheered the martyr's pierced heart ; and the saint broke away from his murderers, and sprung "to be with Christ" that he "might behold his glory."

Paul was struck to the earth by His glory outshining the meridian sun, and penetrated by His all-subduing voice bursting forth from that "heavenly vision."

And to John "one like unto the Son of Man" appeared, and yet so dread and resplendent that the identity could scarcely be determined by him who had "laid his head" on "the bosom" now "girt with a golden girdle ;" who had beheld crowned with thorns "the head and the hairs which were now white like wool, as white as snow ;" who had watched beneath the cross those eyes dim, and fix, and close, which were now "as a flame of fire ;" who had heard the nail driven through "the feet which were now like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ;" who had received the dying commands of that "voice which was now as the sound of many waters ;" who had seen

the right hand scoffingly filled with the reed, whose palm now held "seven stars;" who had observed that mouth impiously struck, from which now gleamed "a two-edged sword;" who had gazed on the countenance furrowed by care, swollen with grief, bathed in blood, which was now "as the sun shineth in its strength."

Heaven witnesses that He is "in the form of God:" He is "in the midst of the throne," He is "the light of the city." He is often the theme of distinctive praise by the angelic and redeemed throng; and the Lamb, with all his sacrificial associations, is added to the otherwise undistinguished Godhead—his memory is woven into every robe, and his name is chanted in every song.

And Judgment shall unfold his "form of God." "He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." The universe shall "flow down at his presence." Heaven, earth, and hell, shall pour forth their multitudes at his tribunal. The moon shall be blood, the sun sackcloth, before the magnificence of that great and terrible day. And then all doubt shall vanish, reproach shall be taken away,—"The Son of Man shall come *in his own glory*."

The argument, therefore presses us,—would this state and glory of Jehovah be lent to the creature? Could attributes and claims, by the which only can the Infinite Supremacy be acknowledged, be transferred to that which is limited, dependent, accountable, and mortal? Must not such an arrangement, provided it were *possible*, induce a confusion most mischievous as well as bewildering? All our notion of *inert* matter is from its qualities, of *being* from its qualities too. It is not the mention of the Divine name which gives the idea of the Divinity: it is power, intelligence, truth, justice, purity, benignity, which are necessary to constitute it. The infinite possession, or, to use phraseology better adapted to our limitation, the highest *conceivable* elevation of these perfections, must belong to a Being, and that Being we call God. Nor can

any thing prevent us from *deifying* such a Being, because all our tests of thought, all our powers of conception, must pursue this reasoning, and must terminate in this result. The absurdity of the contrary course would be, that words must forsake their import, properties their relation,—there could be no First Cause, no Ultimate Perfection, in the universe. God would be known by no discrimination of ideas, and his creatures could not be discriminated from him. Infinitude, omnipotence, self-existence, might be found apart from the Supreme Nature, and would furnish no guides to us in endeavouring to ascertain what that Nature was, in whom it subsisted, and how it stood related to ourselves. If Jesus Christ, "being in the form of God," at the same time is not God, then no predicates in language, no facts in induction, no accessaries in idea, can establish the conclusion, that there is such a being as God,—or, if able to establish it in any given moment, to leave it on an ultimate and irrevocable tenure.

Nor is it unimportant to observe the *supposed independence* which the participle conveys: "*Being* in the form of God." It is spoken of no time, it is rested on no contingency. It is implied to be of an absolute nature. He may do other things, he may assume other characters,—but he begins, if there be beginning to him, with *this;* and it is this which gives its infinite contrast to his "dimness and vexation." It is this alone which can stamp a condescension on his form as a servant, and his fashion as a man. These latter changes belong to a *date,* and evolve from an *arrangement;* and thus differ from that superior condition *notwithstanding* which they were undertaken. And our minds must go back to the period before which he "became poor," when he was "rich;" before he was "made flesh," when his "glory was that of the only Begotten of the Father;" surrounded with the honour which measured his subsequent shame,

and exalted on the height which discovered the depth of his subsequent humiliation. He sat in his own state, he wore his own glory,—insphered in light,—encircled by the angel-host,—reposing on his conscious claim,—enthroned in his own eternal power and Godhead.

II. THERE IS A SERIES OF ACTS TO WHICH WE MUST ATTEND, DERIVING THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AND PECULIARITY FROM THIS ANTECEDENT CONDITION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Though we have not satisfied ourselves that the amendment proposed on the passage is the more correct, or that it is any way more than barely tolerable,—yet we would offer no objection to it. Let the reading be—"He thought it not a prey," something in his range and possession, but not to be retained. He did not, it must be meant, covet to be notoriously and obviously divine. And a certain pleasure seems felt by the projectors of the criticism, whose business is to blaspheme Him, in associating with his character, though in negatives, the ravenous instinct of the beast and the successful plunder of the marauder—the quarry and the booty! But that we can concede without danger, we should justify the common version. We should understand it as an assertion of strict co-equality with every supreme claim and attribute. We should esteem it a consequent upon the form of glorious majesty which he had always possessed. We should have repelled the merest supposition of rapine in this pretension. How could it be "robbery," for infinite knowledge to challenge its omniscience, infinite power to declare its omnipotence, and infinite purity to proclaim itself "incomparably glorious in holiness?" How could this be to wrong the "Majesty on high?" How could he thus desecrate the throne of God? It is "the throne of God and of the Lamb!" Therefore, said he: "All things that the Father hath are mine!"

But in an important sense the Saviour, for the purposes of his love, did not grasp at the honours and displays of

the Divine nature,—willing to forego them, dismissing his train, and disguising his majesty. And we, therefore, in this descending succession of his acts "for us men, and for our salvation," remark

1. *That He did not seek to retain an appearance of divine glory and co-equality.*

But we, before this proposition is examined, must ask how it can consist with the fact of simple humanity?

For it shows what *might have been done.* The power of assuming, and the opportunity of rivalling, the Eternal was in his hand. It was no virtue to forbear what could not be realized. Like a "prey," it was already within the reach of Him who did not regard it with the avidity it might have excited, and who would not seize it. The acquisition which was easy, he declined. He suspended his claims, and abandoned the facilities he possessed, of making himself like God. But how is it to be conceived that this awful power could be lodged in a creature, or subjected to a creature's control? Balaam could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord; nor is he honoured because he did not curse the host. When the Apostle speaks of his power and that of Barnabas to "forbear working," * it refers to the labours of their hands, which often "ministered to their necessities;" and not to a discretionary custody of the miraculous gift. This was never yielded up to human liberty, as are mind and body: it could never be turned by human caprice from the legitimate purpose of its donation. Nor is there supposition more monstrous, than that a creature can possibly wield against his Maker certain *supernatural* influences, freely given, and which, at any moment, might be withdrawn. The fables of mythology would become credible in comparison with this; and we might rather believe that Prometheus stole the fire of heaven, Phaëton obtained the guidance of the sun, and the Titans stormed

* I. Cor. ix, 6.

the battlements of the sky, than that man ever was put into the situation, or endowed with the capacity, to compete with the Supreme.

Besides, applying this to Jesus of Nazareth, on the scheme of his mere humanity, it supposes what never did exist. When was he in "the form of God?" when was there pretext for appearing "equal with God?" At what point did he *begin* to sink? What is the *grace* of his condescension? Is this "form" the *moral likeness* of God? But religion must have taught him to aspire to it as his good and dignity; and there could be no virtue, to found an example to others, in disclaiming this pure ambition.—Is it the *varied attestation* of his nativity? This was not withheld, but shone in the firmament not only to lead the Magi to the stable, but to marshal the spirits of heaven for the celebration of the scene. It cannot be forgotten, too, that the impugners of his Divinity treat the record of the star, the celestial choir, the oriental embassage, as a corrupt interpolation and perfect fable.—Is it *miraculous agency?* Whoever can exert it may be said, in a sense, to have "the form of God." But then He divested himself of it, and did not challenge the implied equality. It must have been before his public ministry. There must be a time when he did, and a time when he did not, perform his mighty works. The time when he did, must *precede* that in which he did not. If we look for "the form of God," we must look for it assuredly ere he laid it aside. Then it was in his earlier life. However, for thirty years, he wrought no miracle! These signs and wonders were reserved for his fuller office and later existence. It would therefore follow, that he desisted to emulate the powers of the Deity at the precise time of commencing their most signal display and self-directing majesty!—But still it may be said that this presumption was obviated by his deference to his Father's authority, by his ingenuous acknowledgment

that his power was but derived. This is not all the truth: for that deference and acknowledgment we will quickly account. There are deeds of power and mercy in his history which he most unexceptionably appropriates: many divine claims he advances, many divine honours he receives. After his resurrection, miracles are done *in his name*, and his followers *call upon it*.

And sufficient reasons may be offered to explain the conduct of any reasonable creature in refusing to make it a thing of overweening pride, of "vaulting ambition," to be "equal with God." These reasons are so palpable, and the consequences of infringing them are so frightful, that here can be no province for "any virtue," and no ground for "any praise." For the *attempt must be most impotent*. Angel might vie with angel, man with man, though their ranks were most extreme. It would be "the potsherds striving with each other." Between the highest seraph and the meanest reptile there are more points of assimilation than difference. But only madness, or that temerity of wickedness which exceeds it, could harbour the idea of supplanting infinity by becoming infinite itself. "Hast thou an arm like God, and canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" The folly would be ridiculous, if the impiety were not more loathsome, which could snatch at the peerless glories of Him who is "higher than the highest." "What is man?" "A worm," "a leaf driven to and fro," "crushed before the moth," "dust and ashes," "clay," "less than nothing," "lighter than vanity." "What is the Almighty?" "All nations before him are as nothing;" "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him;" "he layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters;" "he hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet!" "he humbleth himself to behold the things that are done in heaven;" "the nations move out of their holes like worms of the earth, afraid of the Lord our

God."—And not only were this mimicry of the Supreme, beyond expression, pitiful and abortive—as an *abuse of a solemn delegation* it would be most treacherous. Extraordinary endowments are supposed: these are committed to the creature for a particular end. It is a trust and stewardship. He is under a particular command, and "doth his master thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?" He receives a particular deposit, and "if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Nor can it be a very honourable mention of the Lord Jesus, that, not being superior to man by nature, he did not attempt to engraft himself upon that which is divine,—and that, being commissioned with large authorities, he absolutely restrained himself from employing them against that God and Benefactor from which they, in common with his very being, were received.—But *every approach to a similar crime* is marked in Scripture with a signal reprobation. Lucifer said, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." The prince of Tyrus is represented as declaring, "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God." There is no bolder blasphemy imputed to the Antichristian superstition, than that "its man of sin should oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." A fear of judgments might well deter a creature from encountering the guilt of this vain and impious aggression. In these cited instances a most tremendous doom is threatened. And therefore when the pious have been placed in any circumstances which might leave their conduct at all equivocal in this respect, they have obtested against the honour which could have "robbed God." "Stand up," exclaimed Peter to the prostrate Cornelius, "I myself also am a man." "Why do ye these things?" cried the apostles

Barnabas and Paul: "we also are men of like passions with you." A "worshipping of angels" is not only forbidden, but when "the disciple whom Jesus loved" mistook the object of adoration, his celestial guide rebuked him: "See thou do it not." An implication that such a power was their own as could accomplish the miracle was the sin of Moses and Aaron at Meribah: "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And Herod was "eaten with worms," when elated with the flattery, "It is the voice of a God and not of a man,"—because "he gave not God the glory."

These remarks must tend to convince us that there is a particularity in the person and history of Jesus Christ, which renders his refusal to assume the Divine form, and to insist on co-ordinate rank with the Divine nature, an immense sacrifice, an infinite condescension. In no other view can it be worthy of esteem as the simplest moderation. The contrary supposition is absurd. The "lowliness of mind" which arrogates not to "set itself as the heart of God," banters alike with language and reason. Such disavowal is shocking to the piety which is "clothed with humility."

And yet upon earth he did not tenaciously retain, or openly reveal, his honour. "My Father," he said, "is greater than I." Important information, circumspect admission, truly, if only the created created being! Most emphatic and significant concession, if spoken concerning a voluntary and temporary abandonment of his proper sphere, and abatement of his external glory? There was an obvious propriety in the general suppression of the fact. It was to be gradually learnt from a comparison of his claims and evidences with the inspired writings. It had especially to depend upon his resurrection from the dead, in which he was "declared according to the spirit of holiness," or his manifested divinity, "to be the Son of God with power." It seemed expedient, on general

grounds, that it should be only partially and mysteriously intimated, subjected to a final proof. And therefore it was not made a prominent doctrine or invariable lesson of his mission; though to the inquiring disciple or the adjuring foe, no answers could be more distinct and unequivocal.

But there is one reason which the text alleges as the ground of this conduct: "He made himself of no reputation." We descend another step in the scale of his self-abasement.

2. *He divested himself, actually, of his appropriate and descriptive ensigns of Divine nature and government.*

The original word is, "emptied himself." Of supreme claim and essence he could not be dispossessed: the reference must be to the "form of God." That he threw aside: discrowned his head, resigned his sceptre, forsook his throne. He might have encompassed his person with legions of angels, a circlet-glory might have played about his brow, he might have come forth to our race with all his coruscating splendours. As the Messiah, he might have stooped to earth with all the indications of "a terrible majesty." He might have "stood upon the Mount of Olives," while it "cleaved in the midst thereof." He might have emerged from the Holy of Holies, burst from between the Cherubim, enshrined himself in the Cloud, thundered out of the Oracle, and reclined on the Propitiatory Seat. But his was a purpose of humiliation. This was a necessary means to effectuate his end. He must not bear witness of himself. He must not appear the God. The pretension and array of Deity he must forego and suspend. There is, consequently, a reserve when he speaks of his person, whence he came, who he was, whither he went. He checks expressions of reverential import applied to him, but often in the manner of a claim that is intentionally waived. It is a constructive and pregnant declension. Why, it is asked, did he not,

if a Divine Being, surround himself with a corresponding state? Why should the power, which girds the mountains and rules the sea, not be displayed? Why should not the heraldry of his high praises be asserted? Why was not man apprized of *his* grandeur who now "came to his own?" Why did he not discover "the port of that eternal Majesty that weighed the world's foundations?" Why, again it is asked, did the Son of God not announce himself? Why, "at the entry of the city," why "from the housetop," did he not flash forth the evidence of his true rank and nature? Why did he not, as of old, employ the unambiguous asseveration, "I am the Lord?" Now it is strange that such questions should be asked; because all must admit that a revelation more naturally precedent, necessarily more simple, was withheld. It is allowed, by all the disputing parties, that he was the Christ. His claims to that character are admitted. The miracles which he wrought, to confirm those claims, are admitted too. Yet nothing can be more certain than that he "charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Of the scene on Tabor he "charged them to tell no man until the Son of Man was risen from the dead." To the blind, whose sight he restored, he said, "See that no man know it." He laid the same injunction of silence upon the cure of the daughter of Jairus. The cleansed leper and the tongue-loosed dumb were equally restrained. He imposed this interdict over even infernal spirits, that they "should not make him known."* Can there be any difficulty in reconciling the reserve of a *divine* manifestation, when his *official* mission is intentionally kept back? May we not infer that stronger reasons delayed the dreader revelation, than those which suspended the more simple one?—It will be asserted that there was no meaning in the terms from which we deduce his own declarations of Deity, unless

* Mark iii. 11, 12.

the disciples accepted that meaning. But fact and analogy will furnish a refutation. *Fact*—for it is often recorded that "they understood not the saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not;" and that "they understood not these things at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. *Analogy*—for a type frequently has not a use in the present, but only in a future, time, by furnishing evidence of a divine foreknowledge, and illustrating a distant system of truth in a manner which only the divine establishment and direction of all things could command. "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am."—Perhaps the very familiarity of his followers with the Saviour will be pleaded against their most remote impression of his superior nature. But let it be observed that for such impression, quite independent of the fact, we do not contend: that the possession of miraculous powers, which is undenied, would be scarcely less felt a constraint upon mutual confidence and intimacy: and that an indefinable awe did occasionally steal over the minds, in some measure agreeable to the tremendous truth of His incarnation, "What manner of man is this?" "Truly thou art the Son of God." "They were amazed." "They were afraid and wondered."—And when he had arisen from the grave, surmise and misshapen thought were compacted into a firm conviction, and the most incredulous of all "*believed* and *answered*, My Lord and my God!"—Our answer, therefore, to the question—why He did not throw open at once the robe of concealment, and succintly proclaim his rights? is this:—It was a part of his humiliation not "to strive and cry, or to lift up his voice in the streets, until he had sent forth judgment unto victory." And to have urged his just prerogatives, to have stood up to his original claims, to have given to earth their proper proof,

and to have extorted from it their perfect acknowledgment, would have been to retain that of which he "emptied himself," and must have frustrated his condescending purpose to "make himself of no reputation."

3. *He entered upon a course of responsible subordination.* That voluntary temper which gives its influence to all these successive acts, discovers itself very obviously in the language of this idea: "He *took* upon him the form of a servant:" he laid hold of it, he caught at it, as the original may be expressed. And this deference plainly referred to a particular commission. "I speak not my own words." "This is the will of Him that sent me." "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." "I am come in my Father's name." "My doctrine is not mine." It is most extravagant to affirm that any creature can *assume* the condition of accountability; and it is a gross misconception of the passage, to treat this "form" of service as having relation to the insignia of slavery among men. We read not of any event in his history that can answer to a menial and servile lot. Poor he was, and received of others' substance; but he was only the *servant of the Father.* Therefore was he foretold after this manner: "Behold my servant whom I uphold." "Behold my servant shall deal prudently." "Behold I will bring forth my servant, the branch." And thus his own statements entirely accord with these predictions. What He teaches he has "learned of his Father." He does not "speak of himself." He "seeks not his own glory." Ambassador from God, surety for man, there is committed to him a double trust. He must "lay his hand upon both." The wrongs of the divine government, the liabilities of the human race, he must alike redress and sustain. He was "made under the law." "The law was in his heart." In the constitution of mercy, which he represented by his person and sealed by his blood, he

incurred this awful responsibility. He must pay to the law a perfect obedience, and exhaust its curse by enduring it. He must "fulfil all righteousness." No wonder then that we hear from his lips frequent allusion to a superior will. No wonder that he takes the posture of submission and subordination. However we may be astonished at this fact of condescension, we cannot be, that his language and manner comport with it. With all the meekness of conscious equality and voluntary obligation he seeks power from heaven; presents his praise, "Father, I thank Thee!" urges his supplication, "Father, I pray for them!" expresses his resignation, "Father, not my will but thine be done!" With this spirit of *duty* he drinks the cup and bears the cross.—The general language of Scripture responds to these views. Mediatorial suffering secures mediatorial reward. But subordination is still supposed. The Father "hath given him glory." "The name which is above every name," and which demands that "every knee should bow and every tongue confess," is tributary to the "glory of God *the Father*." The "Son must give up the kingdom to God, *even the Father*."* Until the mediatory economy close, this style of phraseology, this representation of fact, must be expected. "Christ is God's." "The Head of Christ is God." Why should we think it equivocal, or feel it perplexing? What can better subserve the purpose and state the case? "*He took upon him the form of a servant*," and description must be true to such an occurrence, and all arrangement must be in harmony with it! And let us remember that he is the *servant*, though the exalted and rewarded one, until "the mystery of God be finished." "It is manifest that He is excepted who did put all things under him."

* These salvos and limitations are sufficiently intelligible: "the Father," bearing rectoral power in the Covenant, and representing the Deity, is thus *personally* contradistinguished from the Godhead

4. *He united himself to human nature by a perfect incarnation.*

It is a striking peculiarity of language, almost invariably employed by our Lord Jesus, in which he entitles himself the "Son of man." He repeatedly rejects the ordinary mode of address, and announces his own resolves and acts as those of that person: "The Son of man is come." "The Son of man must suffer many things." "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power to forgive sin." "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" We know that nothing is more common than for God thus to speak to man: "Thou, O son of man." But it is unprecedented for man thus to designate himself.—We can enter into the solemn pathos of the dirge-like strain: "Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble." But it would be a vain pleonasm to repeat this circumstance in every self-description. We are aware that it refers, in all probability, to a prophetic test:* nevertheless it is founded upon a strict participation of human nature. That participation was complete. He assumed the structure and the spirit of man. None of the radicals and constituents of manhood were wanting. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." It does not very clearly appear why all this minute and specific information should be furnished respecting one of our race. It was not required by the possibility of the contrary supposition. It is needlessly alleged because there can be nothing in dispute. And yet we are repeatedly told that he "was made of a woman," that "he has come in the flesh," that "he was manifest in the flesh." And this humanity, or "flesh," is defined as the barrier to certain acts and sufferings, of which a superior nature is incapable. "Christ was put to death *in the flesh*." "Of the fathers, as *concerning the flesh*, Christ came." He "was made of

* Dan. vii. 13.

the seed of David, *according to the flesh*, and declared the Son of God with power, *according to the spirit* of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Nothing more is demanded of us now, tempting as these passages are to criticism, than to note that, while the Saviour was unexceptionably human, he was so by no human necessity, and in opposition to a nature transcendent,—unembodied and undying! There is something strange that he should be man at all! It lies within no creative law that he should "come forth in the likeness of sinful flesh." It is not birth, such as angels, and such as worms, obey. And therefore, as if by incidental but most forcible description, he is said by our text to have been "*found* in fashion as a man." Never was there equal discovery! It rivetted the gaze of heaven, earth, and hell! It was the association of weakness with omnipotence, of contraction with infinity, of death with self-existence!

There is a device resorted to by those who would "cast him down from his excellency," which is quite impertinent to the argument at issue. Every verse of Scripture, that implies his limited and assumed nature, is collected with much industry, and then, with equal parade, is urged in disproof of his Deity! Is it then that *we* believe less sincerely the fact of his manhood than themselves? Do they more resolutely than ourselves affirm that he eat, drank, slumbered, mourned, sighed, wept,—felt the pulse of life and the pain of death? Can it be less necessary to our scheme to elicit the marks of dependence and limitation in "the man Christ Jesus?" Are there things which he *does not know?* Are there things which he *cannot do?* How *else* could he be *man?* These restrictions are as indispensable to constitute him human, as limbs and lineaments can be. They as truly indicate the soul, as these parts can characterize the body. There must be as proper growth in the mental faculty as there was in the material form. Let us shrink from no such

statements. Let us allow that he was *"very man."* The mystery of condescension and love is here. We may adore him at the manger when the "holy child," and beneath the cross when the expiring sufferer. We may follow him in all the deep places of his humiliation. As he was "seen of angels," so let him be recognized by us. Awe, intensely overwhelming, will repress a vain curiosity, and heighten a solemn gratitude. We shall not evade any difficulty, but be prepared for the profession of all. Where he "despised the shame," we shall yield to none. And should testimony be subjoined to testimony in confirmation that he was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,"—should every abasing ingredient in the present condition of our species, apart from sinful taint, be made to attach to him,—should every imperfection and infirmity, belonging essentially to all created nature, be adduced to circumscribe him;—we accept the pledge, we hail the proof, that he "was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man!"

5. *He stooped to the most extreme depression of state.*

"Found" thus in another sphere and nature—the subject of an unparalleled transformation—he was not content with the point to which he had bowed himself down. He united himself to our nature in some of its most distressing and degraded forms. Far as he had sunk, he still "humbled himself." Palaces and thrones might have offered a little alleviation. They would have been earthly pinnacles by which to escape from a further descent into penury, trouble, and woe. But he is born of one who can only present the lowliest offering of the law, and whose travail of her illustrious man-child finds its hour in the stable. The supposed father is the carpenter, and he is known as the carpenter's son. He is "subject to his parents." "He is despised and rejected of men." "He has not where to lay his head." He is called the Galilean and the Nazarene of Galilee. He is denounced as con-

certing with Beelzebub, and as possessed of a devil. It was his to say, "I am a worm, and no man:" "Reproach hath broken my heart:" "They hate me without a cause." No contumely was spared. He was "spitefully entreated." "We hid our faces from him." "His visage was so marred more than any man's, and his form than the sons of men." And yet each indignity did he welcome, each outrage did he invite. They entered into his plan of condescension. They were a part of that "mixture of which his cup was full." It is true, that in this spectacle of one so great and so despised, there is an awful mystery. That He should be "taken from prison and from judgment,"—that he should be buffeted and blindfolded, that he should be scourged, that he should be mocked and set at nought,—that they should "smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek,"* that they should shoot out the lip at him, that they should foam and spit upon him, put the reed in his hand, and twine the thorn around his head,—such things involve a difficulty which we could not have explained. The God did not resent them with "rebukes and flames of fire,"—the Man, when "he was reviled, reviled not again,—when he suffered, threatened not." But the explanation has been afforded, the motive has been unfolded,—and He who bore all this scorn,—the victim of perfidy, and the prey of malice,—has traced it to his own choice, and put it within his own adoption,—"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting!" Is this extreme depression inconceivable? Do we ask how it came to pass that he was engulphed in this abyss of woe and debasement?—"*He humbled himself!*"

6. *He reduced himself to the necessity of death.*

It may perhaps be controverted whether the Saviour's body had, being unassociated with sin, any tendency to

* Micah v. 1.

ailment, decay, and death. Our premises are barely sufficient for a decision. But it seems to have been his purpose not to take the form of an Adam, newly fashioned by the Almighty hand, but all the passive qualities and liabilities of Adam's most suffering offspring. That form, in its very organization, was adapted to receive all agonizing impressions. The assumption of a frail dying body might be practicable, even if it was wholly unpolluted. Be the decision what it may, the *submission to death* was the same. For if not *naturally* obliged, then we see his independence of constraint; and *if* naturally obliged, this very independence took it up voluntarily with all its habitudes and conditions. Though it "*behoved* him to suffer," and though he "*must* be put to death," these obligations simply respected his own determinate plan. Men speak of death as "the debt of nature," and most incorrectly, since it is the due and wages of sin. And as it can only occur justly in this connection, and according to this award, He who "did no sin," need not have "gone the way of all flesh," nor have bent to that which is "the visitation of all men." But these observations presuppose a superior nature, which has warranted the assumption of the inferior one, and which still imparted a voluntary merit to all its acts and compliances. For "what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" We are not habituated to speak of that man as the humblest of his race, as meekly taking on him a yoke, as patiently allowing in himself a sacrifice, who at any time expires. We should not quite understand how it was that he consented to die. It would appear a very gratuitous epitaph to his memory that he "became obedient unto death." There is no great room for this freedom, and consequently for this virtue. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." Resignation to an evil is a proper temper,

but a very improper boast. It is a grace of quiet, and not of public fame. It cherishes, in secret, its smile and tear. Its unmurmuring voice, its serene aspect, its gentle heart, are not formed for ostentation. Never did it learn to glory of bearing that which it could not prevent. Never did it "think itself something when it is nothing." But our Lord made choice of that, which to all others of human form is a necessity. He called to him all the snares, and pains, and terrors of death. He bade the monster strike him with its sting, but not until it had been compelled to couch waitingly at his feet. He commanded the grave to open, and make a passage for his march. He had "power to lay down his life, and power to take it again." He delayed not, and hurried not, to die. He told each pang, and deliberated each gasp. And at his prefixed moment, and by his perfect authority, resigned his life, gave up the ghost. There, then,—he bowed himself in conformity to that dying nature which he had espoused for the salvation of a dying race. And are we required to tell how it was that He could suffer the stroke of death? How even that nature, which was so mysteriously bound to the Divine, could be the subject of passion and dissolution? How we can believe in the possibility, and set forth the necessity, of such a decease? How that ill could befall him whom we profess as Immanuel, God with us? Our reply is instantaneous, "*He became obedient unto death?*"

7. *He yielded to death in a peculiar form.*

Crucifixion was a punishment the most acute, lingering, and odious. It fell to the lot of few. The sword, the stake, the axe, the hemlock, were the more frequent methods of dispatching the victims of justice. It was a ban and execration, the fate of the felon and the slave. It suspended the writhing wretch between heaven and earth, as unpitied by either, as renounced by both.

True, every reader of the prophecies must have expected

a suffering Messiah. His "heel was to be bruised." He was "to be cut off." But he was predicted as a sacrifice, as a martyr, as a conqueror, in his death. There is a redeeming glory in these associations. There is a pomp in oblation. There is a force of moral dignity in the constancy of persecuted virtue. There is a blaze of renown cast over the dying conqueror,—Fame blows its trumpet, and Victory prepares its wreath. But this was to be a sacrifice, a martyrdom, a conquest, by a cross, the abhorred engine of torture and shame. It is this which destroys the fascination of the imagery, dispels the charm of the poetry, and obtrudes itself upon us, stern, hideous, and revolting. For this consummation the Saviour contrived a preliminary language. He conjured all to take up his cross, to bear his cross; and they understood him to signify the lengths they must go, and the dangers they must incur, for him. But thus a new cast of expression was moulded, it mixed most naturally with the very facts of his religion, and it was extensively spoken whenever Christians told of mortifying the passions of the flesh, or surmounting the seductions of the world. The "likeness of his death" was ever present to them, the emblem of their every blessing, and the ensign of their every boast.

Yet the probabilities opposed such a means of death. It was not a Jewish punishment. Charged with the crime of blasphemy, a specific doom was adjudged to that crime—the guilty party was to be stoned. The malice of the priests and populace, however, blinded them to the discretion which might have, for a period, upheld their national integrity. They denied the possesion of a power which the governor acknowledged. They for ever put away from them the hope of a Christ, if this prisoner were not he: "We have no king but Cæsar;" "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Fatal self-renouncement! "The sceptre has departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet!" And of this

surrender, the crucifixion of Jesus is the result: "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying *what* death he should die."* It was, notwithstanding, sufficiently similar to an execution in the Mosaic code, to draw upon him a malediction as well as an ignominy; and the outcast, as extended on a cross, was also the accursed, as hanged on a tree.

The inference is, therefore, irrepressible,—the end of these continually deepening acts of humiliation must be worthy of them. They were not performed for their own sake. They have nothing in common with superfluous expense or needless suffering. That end was our salvation by his atoning death. Not a degree in all this descending scale could be spared, not an intervening step in the series might be remitted. There was no resting-place between his throne and his cross. "The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, if it would bring forth good fruit." "The Son of man must be lifted up from the earth, to draw all men unto him." He is not "dead in vain." He sought not his crucifixion but "to put away sin," to "abolish death," to "destroy the works of the devil," to "bring us to God." Therefore he deigned so much, stooped so far, and sunk so low: therefore he grovelled in "the dust of death," put on the ghastly attire of "his burial," and laid down his emaciated and scarred body in the tomb. What a suspense must holy spirits have felt as He was still seen to bend in his flight, as he still passed from higher to inferior measurements of abasement, as he still invented newer forms of reproach and agony, as he still plunged from deep to deep, and only ceased to sink when arrested by the cross and received by the grave!

Now two principles, already anticipated, must have governed these successive deeds. They were *self originated,* strictly independent, purely voluntary; but this can

* John xviii. 31, 32.

be affirmed of no created relations. They were likewise in *contrast* with an antecedent state of being, rendering all these depressions of manhood and death new and strange. Nor do we evade the conclusion that he was as truly God as he was truly man; that he was equal with the Father in the Eternal Essence, while by taking on him our nature he was not "ashamed to call us brethren."

And it is a dark feature of the system which explodes this great and all-important tenet of Christianity, that it reasons against the fact thus represented and indoctrinated, from the sources of an *infinite condescension.* There had been no room for the existence, no colour for the sophism, of this blasphemy, had not He whom it denies veiled his glory and inverted his sphere. If the "form of God" had been retained, if the hosts of heaven had been permitted to declare him, if the enshrinements of divinity had continued to signalize him, if he had not laid aside the phenomena of his proper state, all had bowed the knee, all had confessed his supremacy! Had he "come to destroy men's lives," none of his enemies would have disallowed his rank. It belonged to human impiety, and still serves to distinguish it, that men should be found to take advantage of a foregone honour to discredit it, of a suspended claim to dispute its existence, of a voluntary prostration to deride the idea of any higher original. The manger is cited against his eternal beginning, and the cross against his power of an endless life. They would shackle him with his own bands of love. They would extinguish the glory by the veil which hid its splendour. Henceforth, as he sought not to appear equal with God, they will refuse his resumption of the prerogative. Henceforth they will resolve the form of the servant, and the fashion of the man, into the obligations of moral and physical necessity. Henceforth they will only endure in him the absence of the reputation which he mercifully shrouded. O guilty treason which so attacks

majesty by means of its condescension! O foul ingratitude, which turns to contempt, and requites with scorn, the power which redeemed us, because of the mercy which refused no pang, no shame, required for the ransom!

The EXAMPLE which is founded upon the conduct of Christ, and which it is the design of the text to enforce on our imitation, seems to certify the conclusion that the Saviour is properly divine. Humility and disinterestedness are pourtrayed in him that we may copy them. Our humility is the correct estimate of ourselves; it is the dictate, not of a voluntary depreciation, but a strict self-knowledge. Our disinterestedness is our sympathy with fellow-suffering; is related to a fixed standard of duty, and a certain measure of reward; and therefore stands on opposite grounds to what is discretionary. But this high model is described as unnecessarily humble, and gratuitously benevolent. He comes freely from heaven to earth. He exchanges the form of God for the form of man. What lineaments, what lessons, what realities of the virtues, commemorated and commended, are here! This *is* lowliness of mind! This *is* looking on the things of others! But think of this Exemplar as never living but by human birth, as never subsisting but in human condition: think of him as the man, the mortal, the accountable agent: and then in what is seen his self-abasement? what can entitle him to be the pattern of all meek and retiring disposition? To make his boast that he did not emulate to be like God, is scarcely less audacious than to attempt it. To consider that there is any forbearance in this, is as foolish in its upstart vanity as it is hateful in its contumacious implication. Had the Saviour, being only man, resolved to hold divine equality as his spoil, not to be a servant, not to wear the human guise, not to be obedient to death, —then had his history been an extravagance of presumption, his character had been a beacon of pride, "an

execration, and an astonishment, and a curse!" He must have been classed with the fanatics or hypocrites who have affected divine names, and decreed to themselves divine honours! And had he, being no more than man, but forborne to do this, declined such rivalry, and assumed the position in created nature which he could not exceed,—where would be the pre-eminence of the virtue, the justice of the applause? Forbearance to rebel is not fealty. He becomes not of necessity the saint, who is not the blasphemer; nor need he be humble who arrogates not the divine resemblance, and usurps not the divine throne. These are not the moral alternatives of the case. There may be other intervals in the scale. And when a virtue is affected on the plea of abstinence from a vice, not only is ignorance expressed, but that vice is actually indicated. If, under the supposed circumstances, this was our Lord's humility, it would be pride; if this his piety, it would be profaneness. The withdrawment of such a purpose, the imposition of a stress upon such a refusal, the boast of such withdrawment, the mention of such refusal, would be a bravado of mockery and defiance towards the Most High, unknown to the pride by which the angels fell. Nor should we think of our nature's fall with any surprise, or with much disgust; since our attempt to "become as Gods" was, in all comparison, so immeasurably inferior in its character of impiety and its outrage of expression.—The defensive conduct we are compelled to pursue gives rise to this distressing peculiarity of the controversy. It is a bitter pain to speak of Him in this manner, to press the consequences of a false criticism and an irrational theology until they trench, though only most hypothetically, upon his dignity and truth.

Dear Christians, ye have "learned Christ." You have banished all doubts of his perfect claim to be equal with God. You discover, in all that at first may seem to oppose

the conviction, only the facts of his incarnate humiliation and condescending grace. You cannot taunt him with these, nor employ them to impugn the prerogatives which they temporarily obscured. You cannot oppose such voluntary concealment and subjection to the divinity of Him "whose right it is." You know that there is no real argument, any more than generous temper, in denying his celestial dignity from his earthly abasement, since the reality and virtue of his depression must constantly refer to his pristine ascendency. You rejoice, however this unholy strife assails the character and glory of the Saviour here, that you are approaching a world in which there can arise no darkening prejudice, no chilling doubt, but all is "quietness and assurance forever." There you shall "see him as he is." There you, with all the powers of heaven, shall adore him! And while you fall down before him, that multitude shall be filled with one sentiment, that service shall be devoted to one purport,—all shall be wrapt in one vision, all shall be vocal with one strain—nor blasphemy mar a harmony or wound an ear!

It only remains that we revolve two lessons impressed upon us by these meditations.

1. *How admirable is the expedient of the Redeemer's incarnation.*

Man, when unfallen, being by the law of all created nature still dependent, required an object for love, and a ground for rest. The Deity, simply considered in reference to him as worthy of complacency and favour, filled all his thoughts and attracted all his affections.

Man cannot be less dependent now that he is fallen. He is not only physically upheld, as is every holy being; but, morally destitute, spiritually helpless, he must owe the recovery of his happiness to a form of Divine benevolence—not necessary to the most perfect *lawgiver,* not applicable to a creature unless he has become a *transgressor,*—that is Mercy.

God was the source of perfect satisfaction, a portion, an all, to man when made upright, and pronounced very good: to man, the sinner, the fugitive, he was a source of terror and dismay. And from that hour in which his progenitor hid himself and was afraid, the Creator has not been in his thoughts, or has entered to distract them.

Where, then, should the conceptions and attachments of the human mind fix themselves? What might they embrace? They could not the Supreme, they must not the creature; they shrunk from the one, they diffided in the other; the first was a forbidden worship, the second a palpable idolatry.

Infinite Wisdom and Pity resolved the tremendous difficulty. Christ, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," "found in fashion as a man," clothed with a bodily form—the organ of the human spirit as well as the shrine of the indwelling Divinity—Christ is that Mediate Object. "The Lord God dwells among us." The more intense and awful splendours are allayed and softened by this intervention. On a divine arm, which bears up the pillars of the universe, we hang our hope; into a human bosom, which itself has heaved with grief, we "pour out our hearts" with all their confidence and all their sympathy. Our awe chastens our esteem, and our esteem attempers our awe. This is the contact in which Deity and man may meet, the mysterious tye of underived and created being, the convergence of that which can "array the terrors of God" and that which is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This "Mediator is not of one," "He maketh peace in the high places," "He came and preached peace to us who were afar off." He has brought heaven to earth, he has raised earth to heaven. He "took hold on our nature," nor relaxed his grasp until he had placed it, as proper to his very person, "in the midst of the throne." His heart, which was wrung with sorrow and pierced with violence,

which yearned with filial love, which throbbed with friendly commiseration—sensitive to every impulse of pity, responsive to every importunity of woe—has not grown cold nor become estranged from those for whom it broke and bled; but expands as the index of infinite love and the channel of eternal good! "O the depth!" we may well exclaim: but it not only swallows our thoughts, it wells up the fulness of our joys!*

Inane are the objections which our sciolists and witlings urge. Incomprehensible, it is alleged by them to be. Who ever doubted it? Is it not involved in the fact? "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." As unparalleled, it is still demurred to; and singularly we are asked to find some likeness to it above or beneath. It is of itself incapable of support from any analogy and illustration. But if a fact, is not this inevitable? "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth!" May these have another mind given them! May these cavils yield before the evidence of this stupendous wonder—the perception of its fitness and the experience of its power!

2. *What a sublime example does the conduct of the Saviour afford!*

* The Socinians love to taunt us with our Anthropomorphite philosophy. We regard it as an abuse of the Incarnate Mystery. Nor shall we abandon the *truth* because of a perverse misconception. *They* prove to us that there always have been heretics, and that this modern class has little reason to exult over its predecessors. Could we be stung into the extreme of any opinion, by its improper representation, they would have long since driven us to the denial of the Divine Unity by the ignorance they have displayed, and the use they have made, of it. But whatever was the error of some in an early age, we still hold that Christ, the Son of God, came in the flesh;—and whatever are the sophisms of them to whom, of all communities since its origin at Antioch, the *christian name* must only be denied, "to us there is but one God." Do *we* materialize the Deity? Hear a prophet of their own! "The complicated motions of the stars are as the workings of an OMNISCIENT BRAIN"!!!—W. J. Fox's "Christ and Christianity," vol. I. p. 295.—This is carrying the Medullary doctrine somewhat far. What shall we have next?

This being the basis of His unique and incomparable person, we behold in him dispositions the most varied, and yet the most consistent. Whatever independence can sway with the upright, or humility with the meek; what holiness with the pure, what forbearance with the lowly; what unwearied employment with the active, what sweet repose with the contemplative; what interest the generous mind can take in philanthropy, what, on the contrary, the severer mind can in rigour and self-denial; what reverence greatness can raise in the noble, and esteem kindness can awaken in the tender; what encitement is in knowledge to fix the thoughtful, and in exertion to stimulate the ardent; what can enkindle zeal, and what inspire devotion; what can strike the saintly sage with veneration, and what win from the outcast penitent the smile of confidence and peace; what counsels the human soul in its true interests, and what composes the writhing limb and fevered pulse of the human frame; what exists but to heal the cup of life, and to soothe the sting of death;——oh, if such a combination of qualities be unlooked for on earth, be unhoped for in man, these are but some of the slighter touches, the fainter lineaments, of that Character which "is full of grace and truth;" the dim reflections of that Person in whom all the awful and all the amiable are united; who, while angels bent at his feet, caught babes to his bosom, and prest them to his heart; who, while demons fled affrighted from his rebuke, suffered to drop upon him the tears of the contrite and the mourner; who, amidst his march of miracles, oft stood still to weep; who turned aside from his sterner and more heroic acts, to cherish friendly intercourse and domestic benignity; who, "lowly in mind," bore his own cross; who, "looking not on his own things but the things of others," delayed to close his sufferings until he had secured his mother from destitution, promised the dying malefactor a place in his kingdom, and besought the forgiveness

of his murderers! Thus "pleasing not himself," when he might have been most self-engrossed! Thus "pouring out his soul" of matchless love and pity "unto death," though in a moment he might have undeceived the mockeries of the multitude! Himself he will not save—though he might have left the world to perdition! He will not come down from the cross—though he might have left it for the throne! Such was his example, and we must follow his steps! Such was his temper, and "let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus." —"Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

SERMON VI.

THE ATONEMENT.

John i. 29.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

It has been not unfrequently objected to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, that they alone can be inferred from the later portions and epistolary compositions of the New Testament; that the Lord Jesus never seems to have intended them, and that it appears his disciples and general auditors never understood him to inculcate them. On this supposition we may account for much of their conduct who neither entertain nor profess any predilection for these evangelical verities. The narratives, which are commonly styled *gospels*, are specially favoured by them; and are conceived to supply a warrant for their scepticism and dislike. They argue that as these report the assertions of Messiah, the doctrine which fell from his lips in the very form of its utterance, the fidelity of the record must be less affected, and the accuracy of the expression less distorted, than when committed to other vehicles, and forced through other channels. But since error is always inconsistent, the apologists for one part of Revelation at the expense of the other do not invariably attribute infallibility and pay deference to the Evangelists themselves. A way of escape is made practicable even from their decisions. The question of inspiration can offer to

such parties no difficulty: it is held in a manner, if allowed at all, that renders it capricious as individual impression, and frail as human remembrance.

It may be incidentally remarked, that the sacred writers are manifestly unconscious of any disparity, and are far removed from any jealousy, whatever the province occupied by them. They contentedly take their place, and fill their department; honouring in each other "the self-same spirit," and conceding the authority which they challenge for themselves. Thus Peter, whose opportunities of weighing the facts chronicled by the biographers of the Saviour, were equalled by few and excelled by none, places "*all the epistles of Paul*" among "*the other scriptures.*" *

Nothing would be more vain than to disguise the fact that the epistles do embrace more ample and explicit information touching the *doctrines* of the evangelical system—their definitions being more precise, and their arguments more extended. This was due to the advanced stage of the Christian dispensation in which they were written, and was to be expected from the descent of the Spirit, "who could not be given until Jesus was glorified." These larger accessions of knowledge, these brighter discoveries and accumulated proofs, far from dishonouring Him, were announced and foretold by Him: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." †—For we should not forget that the *doctrines* are but expositions of the *facts* which occurred in the history of Christ. They are not

* II Peter iii. 16.

† There seems no propriety in the practice of the Roman and English churches when their members sit without a thanksgiving to hear the epistle, but rise to the gospel with the sound of doxology—as though the latter were the fuller "mind of Christ" than the former,—a position the reverse of truth.

theories, or simple principles, but the natural and intended construction put on circumstances which occured in certain places and at certain times, together with reasonings well supported by them, and strictly deducible from them. Then *could* the *doctrines* be taught when the *facts* had not transpired? But while the Son of Man lived on our earth, the cardinal facts of his mediation were unaccomplished. It remained for him to die and rise again. He, after his resurrection, interpreted these events to his disciples, who were to "teach all nations." Their instructions are those interpretations. We enjoy the benefit of His latest disclosures, when, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." His historians received the same illumination, it is true; but then they adhered to the simple task of adducing what they had either seen or understood "from the very first:" his other inspired servants extracted the lessons and pursued the conclusions.

The very limited and even gross apprehensions of the disciples, may furnish an additional reason for the partial concealment, or rather gradual developement, of the Christian mysteries. The secular ambition which too often governed them, is apparent in many of their questions to our Lord, and also in their replies to those which he suggested. They deprecated his death, and yet esteemed themselves able to "drink of his cup." And when that death was inflicted, and he was laid in the tomb, bitterly they spoke of their ruined expectations and blasted hopes. It never could have been possible to convince them that such catastrophe was necessary; its consummation induced them to inquire and compelled them to think, while the Risen Sufferer then witnessed to them, that "thus it was written of him," and that "so it behoved him to suffer."

Besides, it is the uniform plan of prophecy to intimate the future enigmatically and progressively. Forming a

part in the scheme of universal government, these characteristics of obscurity and partiality are requisite to sustain the authority of fixed law, and the freedom of human agency. But all the declarations made by our Lord partook of a prophetic nature. They should not, therefore, be so explicit as to enable the kindness of his followers, or the malignity of his enemies, to attempt, however ineffectually, any obstruction to his plans. He must move onward in his course undisturbed by their counterplots; they must proceed in their's unprompted by his prescience and unhampered by his will.

We do not, however, suppose that it would be difficult to demonstrate that, whatever essentially belongs to the christian system is included in the evangiles. They leave not unproved the *divinity* of Him who could say: "He that cometh from above is above all; he that cometh from heaven is above all." They leave not unasserted the *atonement* of Him who could say, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." They leave not unexplained the *dominion* of Him who could say, "My kingdom is not of this world." They leave not unpledged the *influence* of Him who could say, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." These august truths are shrouded with no affected secresy. The books which record the corresponding facts, and not seldom announce the appropriate doctrines, are "treatises of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up." And as if no needless concealment should perplex them, —see the pointed hand, and hear the uplifted voice, of him "that cried in the wilderness,"—who, giving utterance to every divine counsel, and fulfilment to every scriptural pledge, proclaims,—while heaven and earth ring with echoes, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." A clearer insight into "the

mystery of godliness," a stronger attestation to "the truth as it is in Jesus," could not be supplied. It was not only to raise the veil,—it was to uncover the ark.

The *lamb* has been accounted an image of innocence and gentleness. It has scarcely any means of defence, scarce any instincts of resentment,—but is one of the most lovely emblems of each kindlier disposition that nature's numerous tribes afford.

But it is placed before us in scripture, as the animal peculiarly devoted to *sacrifice*. It was the common victim of the altar. Two were immolated every day for a "continual burnt-offering." To these another pair was added weekly for "the burnt-offering of the Sabbath." Seven more were required at each new moon. Sixteen were offered on the day of Pentecost, and fourteen when that of the Trumpets returned. This latter number was also due to the feast of Tabernacles during all the respective days it lasted, while other seven were added on the eight. Through the Passover seven lambs were presented as often as the same number of days occured, with one more on that which immediately followed the first.

To the other sacrificial animals the Saviour is not directly compared, but this assimilation is frequent. The correspondencies are frequently marked. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." "Ye know that ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Heaven is filled with the commemorative imagery. It gives prominence to every associated idea. It hangs high all the memorials of piacular infliction, suffering, and death. It breathes the incense of an oblation. It becomes the holy of holies to receive the votive gift. Christ "entered it not without blood." Though sacred to peace and life, it is a scene impressed with vengeance and mortal woe: resounding with accents of gladness, the "blood of sprinkling speaketh" the stress and harmony of all. "The Lamb is on

Mount Sion." He is the song, the light, the bridegroom, the temple: in the stream of his side the celestial robe acquires its purity, and the redeemed multitude never fail to rehearse that he "was slain." Surely, these are not accidental mementoes, when the prevailing figure so little agrees with the various other descriptions.

Being designated the "Lamb of God," we learn that in conformity with the terms of his humiliation, he was "chosen of God," was "sanctified, sealed, and sent by the Father," was set apart in human nature and mediatory office for the purpose of a sacrificial death. When revealed in his pre-existent honours, and when we connect with them the fact that "he was verily foreordained as a lamb before the foundation of the world," they seem the decorations which enwreath the victim, the presages of the fatal blow. The wood was heaped into its pile,—the fire was fanned into its fury,—the knife lay glittering with its keenest edge,—and "God provided the Lamb for the burnt-offering."

It can only concern us now to observe that the way in which a "lamb taketh away sin," is not very intelligible if the idea of sacrifice be exploded. In the emblematic qualities of the animal we find nothing to suggest the notion of removing guilt; and had a conception of muscular strength been sought, it would have been better conveyed by the "lion coming up from the swellings of Jordan." Between the circumstances of the Saviour's appointment and death, and those of the Paschal Lamb, there may be traced a most striking resemblance. It is, however, to be doubted, whether the allusion exists in the present connection. It is the general idea of sacrifice. Could the allusion be established, it would only confirm the particular end proposed in the death of the cross. It has, indeed, been insinuated that it was not an expiatory rite, but a national solemnity and domestic service. It is surely forgotten then, that the ministrations of the *temple*

sustained, expounded, and consecrated these. And nothing can be more determinate than the language of the inspired volume in its extreme portions, when it either speaks of the shadow or the substance: "Thou shalt not *sacrifice* the passover in any of the gates the Lord thy God shall give thee." "Christ our passover is *sacrificed* for us."

Little short of quibbling would it be to assign any restricted sense to "the world," as the term arises in the text. Though it must sometimes indicate the material frame, the Jewish state, the Roman commonwealth, the sinful majority and embodied evil of mankind,—yet nothing, save the prejudice of system, and the recklessness of party, could ever define it here, but as intending the *Human Race.* Respecting the particular application of this death, and the distinguishing grace which causes it, we have no present inquiry: nor have we to discuss the position that, dying in certain relative characters, such as spouse, shepherd, and surety, he determinately secured the salvation of a "peculiar people:" nor have we to argue that a security of efficiency was necessary to justify the means he expended upon his design, and to constitute his reward. In a substantive sense "the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world," that is, the species.

It is purposed, in the ensuing discourse, to treat of that which may be considered not so much a sentiment and part of the Gospel, as its very self. For the sacrifice of Christ is the fact which alone gives validity, and the supposition which alone imparts consistency, to its entire system.

I. IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO OFFER SOME GENERAL EXPLANATIONS.

According as we notice the aspects of the Saviour's death, we may occasionally vary our language. Has it a special reference to Divine Justice? It is a *satisfaction.* Does it contemplate injury and indignity offered by us to

the character and government of Him "who ruleth among men?" It is an *atonement.* Does it denote the consequences of that event towards ourselves? It is an *expiation.* Should any object to words which are alleged to be without scriptural warrant,—we reply that the phraseology of inspiration is significant, and that we best honour, when we investigate, it. It may be cited in the most literal manner to excuse thought, protect artifice, and supersede confession. The holy book is to be understood, and other language than its own must be the method of stating and avowing its meaning. But this is only a negative justification of our nomenclature: we can urge another more decisive. These terms are not unknown in the "lively oracles," "the scriptures which testified of Christ," belonging to the former dispensation. They are there used of the *types,* we maintain that this is sufficient sanction when we affix them to the antitype with a still ampler force and stricter application. Nor is it equitable for them who quarrel with our use of what we deem correlative and tantamount expression, to persist in the practice themselves. What is their authority for the familiar employment of Deity, Providence, Christianity? Why mete to us a standard by which they cannot themselves abide?—The word *atonement,* may be *secular* in its use: as when offence and injury are repaired by certain amends, or are overlooked upon particular considerations. We have but to dismember it, and it presents the idea of unity or being *at one* to the very eye. Moses interposed to bring his brethren to peace: our version has it, "he would have set them at one again."* But as a *sacred* term, it implies the satisfaction made to justice, and substituted for the offender, in the form of a sacrifice. The guilt, or exposure to punishment, is confessed, the blow of that punishment is diverted from its proper course, and falls upon a third and representative party. As a religious

* Acts vii. 26.

ceremony the *offering* is well understood, and in all circumstances which connect it with the deprecation of penalty and the effusion of blood, is, of its own nature, generally allowed to be vicarious and expiatory. It cannot be a fitting expression of thanksgiving: it wars with all the melting calm of devotion: but sternly it reminds the transgressor of his desert, while it depicts at the same time the principle on which that award is arrested. An atonement is thus convertible with sacrifice: and both necessarily involve a compensative principle and a retributive act, strangely and mercifully turned aside from them on whom they should have fixed, and yet on another duly exacted and rigorously enforced.

We believe the death of Christ is such a transaction,—that it is a sacrificial endurance in his person of our moral liabilities,—that it is an infliction on him of what we had incurred,—that it is the only honourable consideration on which divine justice can remit the culprit's sentence, and receive the culprit's contrition,—that it is a redress and a means of reconciliation,—that it leaves our Maker with as strict consistency to pardon as he had ever known of necessity to punish,—that it is in fact a contrivance to convince man of his deepest guilt by bestowing upon him his fullest salvation, and to impress the universe with the sublime sentiment that infinite purity hates sin as much as infinite mercy loves the sinner. Henceforth the Ruler of heaven and earth can "declare his righteousness in the remission of sin," can "be just and acquit him who believeth in Jesus."

It must be noticed, and with most emphatic distinctness, that there is no *reluctance in the Divine Being to receive the sinner, and to restore favour to him.* Nothing that is good can He oppose; and this great amount of happiness must be an object of his most perfect complacency. Evil of every kind is abhorrent to Him, and is what he would not should exist, and what he bends all things to destroy.

This is the reason and mode of His placability, his readiness to forgive, his delight in mercy. To make all his creatures blessed was his original design, is his constant work: and whatever mars and thwarts it antagonizes his will, known and moral, than which none other can be attributed to him. So far from the intervention of an atonement betraying such reluctance, it proves that there was a *disposition and determination of mind*, which perceiving all the possible difficulties in its exercise, was prepared to surmount them all.

And by the Atonement of the cross there is produced no *revolution of the Divine Character*. "God is of one mind," "his counsel shall stand," he "changeth not." Essential excellence and necessary perfection, as well as absolute power and original authority, combine in him, and express themselves in his government. His nature is full of congenial activities, and his government of corresponding purposes. His immutability does not consist in a suspension of that which is "his work," nor in any limitation imposed upon his ever-developing counsels. And therefore, when the Saviour "offered up himself," though the divine character took a new aspect and entered a new relation, still there was the same hostility to sin, the same fidelity to law, the same impartiality of justice, the same beauty of holiness, as must invariably have united in the Deity, whatever was his plan, and must have distinguished all his conduct towards intelligent and accountable beings. No course of time, no change of circumstance, could make these less or more.

It becomes us, consequently, to be very cautious how we speak of the *Divine dispositions*. Many of the figures which indicate these must be interpreted with a subdued sense. The passions ascribed to God shadow out properties incapable, from their changeless perfection, of excited intensity. The unfailing resolve, the calm majesty, of essential rectitude is his. The splendour of his glory

never trembles with a varying light, nor shoots forth a wavering effulgence. When his "fury," his "hot displeasure," his "wrath unto the uttermost," are threatened or wreaked; when his vengeance seems impatient of delay and glowing for ebullition; when he is "pacified;" when his "repentings are kindled within him;" when he "retains not his anger;" when he inquires how he shall "give up;" when he "waits to be gracious;" when "his anger is turned away:"—we must correct our first and crude impressions by those great illustrative principles which declare him to be "a Spirit," who "changeth not," "cannot be hindered," and "reproves" every notion that he is "such a one as ourselves." The death of Christ is the only medium of mercy to the fallen race of man; but it appeased no divine emotion, neither could it augment the divine benevolence. It was the *effect*, and not the *cause*, of that benevolence: marking its existence, and not inducing its consent. The Deity *was* propitious; the atonement is the voucher of the fact; and upon its consummation, neither His *reluctance* was removed—for it is his spontaneous act; nor was His *character* transformed—for it is his native delight; nor was His *passion* placated—for it is his manner of "commending his love" and "shewing his mercy." And the compatibility of this arrangement may be made plain. Should it be asked,—why God expended so much to realize his own will and equally his pleasure; we reply:—His moral perfections, with the respect due to them as the standards of all happiness in the universe, —His moral rules, with the necessity of enforcing all their original exactitude to make them not only "just" but "good,"—these are the grounds of his conduct. He cannot deny himself. His will is but the activity of his nature, and that activity can only move in the line of eternal right. If he will pardon and renew the sinner, that is a good; but there would be an infinitely counteractive evil if that good were attained by any connivance

at his sin, for the good of the creature would be the price for the faithlessness, injustice, and demoralization of the Creator! The atonement is God's resolve to be consistently merciful! Two scripture passages may illustrate his method of procedure: passages we select for the purpose of *illustration*, without imposing on them any such meaning.—"It is strange that God who can do all things" (this is the objection) "should not forgive it at once. Why should he allow a difficulty and a restriction? Why not act the Potentate? Why not burst through all by his omnipotence?" The objection blinks all moral principle. What upright man, of influence and wealth, *can* do all things, whose consequences that influence and wealth would indemnify? *Can* he falsify and degrade himself? Does he not demonstrate his abhorrence of these alternatives best when he pronounces that he "cannot do them,—and is incapable of them?" He can add nothing more. Who that is principled can contradict and oppose himself? So far as human predicament may exhibit Divine obligation, the instance is complete. The law was *meant* and cannot be revoked; its menace was *intended* and cannot be reversed; and whatever is carried on beneath them must be serious, inflexible, and resistless. The *first* illustration from the inspired records is taken from the history of Job. God was willing and determined to pardon Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. But it could only be in a certain way. They were to take a particular sacrifice, and to "go to his servant Job." They were to be indebted to a particular mediation. "My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly. And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he had prayed for his friends." Here are institutes of expiation and intercession appointed by the Deity with whom they are to avail!——But it is necessary that the creature who is saved should welcome and approve that salvation. He cannot be made happy in spite of

himself. There must be concurring judgment and responsive will. The atonement is therefore required to be offered in a way most powerfully impressive to him. He must learn from it how guilty is he, how to it he is obliged, with an emphasis nothing beside could reveal. He must be as religiously, as legally, affected by it. It must as truly transform his disposition as alter his relation. And the second illustration we adapt from the language of Paul to Philemon: "But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly." Let the sinner behold and consider what a series of awful preparatives, of rigorous terms, of dread inflictions, was enforced, or otherwise there could be no redemption; and he cannot but abhor that which was the occasion of the demand, nor fail to admire and to adore the love which met the demand, rose to its amount, and complied with its magnitude. And in this manner both the parties are, so to speak, morally and personally pledged: The Deity operates with "the counsel of *his will*," and Man is "made *willing*," "*persuaded*," "*drawn*," and "*brought nigh*." A pardon, simple and abstract, had left God dishonoured and belied,—man impenitent and rebellious,—forever! But now is He better vindicated than he could be by the consequences of direct punishment,—and man, in the solemn lesson taught him, receives "the benefit" not of "necessity, but willingly."

The moral defection of our nature had introduced a frightful innovation. This could not be overlooked. Nothing must betray indifference to it. We were forewarned that it should be resented. This issue alone could be arrested by some moral counterpoise. It could not be foregone, unless three ends were previously secured. *First*, the purity of the divine character must be cleared. Sin is an attack upon it, is its denial and insult, and any forbearance on its part to repel and avenge the wrong, would be its own abandonment and compromise. Im-

punity would seem a connivance and misprision. If it resists not, it allows, its dishonour. The demonstration must be prompt and signal that "evil cannot dwell with it," that a shadow of suspicion cannot settle upon its infinite perfection. *Secondly*, the rectitude of moral government must be asserted. The law is either just or not, and the directing power is either true or not to itself and to us. Any relaxation would argue that it had been unduly strict, any suspension that it was recklessly vacillating, any infringement that it was frivolously inconsistent. The whole must be maintained, or it originally required too much, and dealt in unmeaning threats. Not a jot or title can pass away. And, *thirdly*, the well-being of all creatures capable of religion must be established. That of course finds its archetype in the divine character, and its expression in the moral law. In proportion, therefore, as that character was debased, and that law was violated, the very source of intelligent and holy pleasure would be tainted. Man, instead of rising by an immortal progression to the resemblance and blessedness of the Deity, would behold in that Being a nature of caprice, and in his conduct an implied approval of evil In that deterioration would be our decadence and ruin. Let any light view of sin be encouraged, let any screen be thrown over the offender, let any thing be done which tampers with the standard which is "ordained to life,"—and the interests of the only good of God, and angels, and man, are shattered and wrecked forever.—These are the issues which, before a step can be taken towards our recovery, must be firmly and as notoriously ensured. All, then, proves that there *was* a necessity to punish: the character, the law, the created system, of the Lord our God left him no alternative. If he refused, he must set a contradiction in that character, cause a repeal of that law, and drag down that system from all the happiness for which it was contrived, and all the honour of which it

was susceptible. Failing in truth, he must have failed in every attribute of moral excellence; and so have wrested irrecoverably from us every sense of obligation, every hope of reward, every impulse of improvement.

The Atonement is the punishment of sin—a condemnation of it, a sacrifice for it. It "puts," "takes," it "away." It "makes an end of it." It is an assertion of its "exceeding sinfulness," and a spectacle of the "fiery indignation" which has overtaken it. And around the altar of awful sacrifice, to which the victim was bound, and upon which the at once avenging and approving flame fell and kindled, we may read the inscription: "All His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."

But henceforth the necessity to punish the actual culprits was withdrawn. It remained in no shape, and could place itself on no ground. The bolt had sped and spent. The justice is in the retribution, the mercy in the diversion of it from ourselves. Consistency gave choice of no other medium, and benevolence could not exceed that act. The "readiness to forgive," ascribed to the Holy One, is now exhibited, not by a gratuitous manifestation, but as counteracting every difficulty and lavishing every price. "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? God that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died? yea rather that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God: who also maketh intercession for us?" No obstacle exists to the spontaneous overflow of infinite love. Whosoever will may "drink of the fountain of the water of life freely." This placability not only originates itself, but opens its own channel. It is *unconstrained*, for it directs its own means. It is *uncompelled*, for it constitutes its own necessity. It is *unbought*, for it defrays its own cost. The atonement stands to this Placability in the precise

relation of an act to its motive, and an effect to its cause. God is not propitious because Christ has become a sacrifice, but Christ has become a sacrifice because God is propitious.

This work of sacrifice must be invariably connected with that holy government which the Divine Being administers among men. It is an essential part of it. And we must surely perceive the advantage which arises from the circumstance of legislative appointment and sanction. It becomes its own reparation and decree. Not only does it receive its general and silent countenance—it springs from itself. Whatever there is of force in law, of wisdom in order, of majesty in authority, it acquires. The "throne of glory" must not be "disgraced."* The Atonement disabuses and rectifies every mistaken suspicion and imputation which had ever passed over its sanctities. "It is upholden by mercy," as well as "established in righteousness." The arrangement is therefore placed upon these fixed and certain principles; and "it became Him *for whom are all things, and by whom are all things*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."

These views of the Atonement once settled in the mind, we can infer many important conclusions. Its *character* stands out with a legal aspect. Therefore the method of "justification" is by a "righteousness," which means that we are accepted on the ground of a moral equivalent: the state to which we are introduced is a "redemption" that is coupled with the condition of "a ransom." Every statement is of a forensic complexion. The whole work is a legislative and judicial one. "The sentence comes forth from His presence, whose eyes behold the things that are equal." And does it not "assure our hearts," when Justice becomes our advocate, and Law our plea?—The true ground on which this Sacrifice finds its *necessity*

* Jerem. xiv. 21.

is thus satisfactorily explained. To avoid the notion of a vindictive proceeding, a class of writers have made it their business to describe the fact as an expedient rather than a requirement. They conjecture that it is more related to wisdom than to the inflexible rules of justice. But *we* cannot understand how infinite wisdom should pursue any but the wisest plan, nor how that plan can be the wisest which is not most true to equity and obligation. It is still necessary, to help our frailty and aid our discrimination, that we have recourse to that view of the Divine character which distributes it into particular qualities or attributes. And then most clearly does it seem that such a sacrifice—in the disseverment of its flesh, in the libation of its blood, in the extinction of its life—was a requital of sin, a forfeit to justice, a compliance with an irreversible demand. It was "not possible that this cup should pass from" our Lord. Alternative would impeach the righteousness of this severe infliction. If it were chosen from among many—a something undebarred and unessential, a happy suggestion, a convenient device—it is indefensible because gratuitous, it is unjust because not inevitable. Let us remember that "God is judge," that he will "in no wise clear the guilty," that he "will repay;" let us put into this remembrance the facts of the present case; and the sternness of the principle which enforced the Saviour's death will appear but its impartiality, and both cannot fail to illustrate the Mercy which as deliberately respected the standard of the claim as it tenderly undertook its discharge. The exaction of this suffering and death is of a moral order: and whatever transpired beneath it bears a similar impress.—The *fitness* of such an expiation arises from this circumstance. "Mercy and Truth meet together: Righteousness and Peace kiss each other." It is the perfect alliance between the divine government and the penitent sinner. Its aspect has not a frown, its sword no

edge, for him. It only plants its terrors around him for his defence. Holiness shews the pattern, Justice becomes the surety, Truth swears the oath, of our salvation. It is thus said that "God is our salvation;" that he is "for us;" that he is "on our side;" that he "taketh part with us." How amazing the moral transposition, that He, who so lately exclaimed "I am against you," should protect us by that very shield on whose bosses we had rushed, and make the law we had broken the instrument of rescuing us from all the consequences of our transgression.—It is therefore *available.* Not only is there need of a competent efficacy to remove the penalties of guilt, there must be representation of that efficacy to meet its fears. The affrighted sinner shudders at all the ideas of justice and the relations of law. He renounces all hopes from having kept, or from being able to keep, it. "The commandment comes!" "Sin revives and he dies!" But it is so ordered that he shall see "the law magnified and made honourable" in the pardon tendered to him. He shall behold the ministers of wrath in the train of love. He shall hear the very trumpet of Sinai, like the silver one of a feast, only "waxing louder and louder" with glad tidings of mercy and peace. His prepossessions of alarm are anticipated and allayed, while their occasion is constituted the title of his happiness and the safeguard of his defence. Sweet thought to the trembling offender, that "God is *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!"—All question concerning its *extent* must terminate when we take this view of the Atonement. Be it remembered that it is a provision for vindicating the divine government, and exercising the divine mercy. That which is therefore *divine* is its only scale: what is divine must be infinite. Many inquiries may arise as to the nature, cause, and direction of its application, but its universal aspect and sufficiency are placed beyond dispute.

It is that which would, all other circumstances being equal, enable the righteous Lord of our race to have mercy upon all men, and is a warrant for all men to seek that mercy. It is as much the enactment of his government as the law itself; and still more than the law reflects and illustrates his infinitely holy character. We therefore put from us all supposition of arithmetical proportion and admeasured value between its worth and its experience; for its utilities consist in other relations than those which are human, and its design to benefit earth is subordinate to that which is only proper to God, and by which only He can benefit any portion of the universe,—the glorification of Himself! It is with this reference of the atonement to the divine dominion that the Scripture says,—"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

We are fully aware that our business has, as yet, been simply that of *explanation:* and just reasoning compels that a subject be duly propounded ere we enter on its defence. But we now hasten to the *Confirmation of the Doctrine,* which will form

THE SECOND PART OF THE DISCOURSE.

1. The analogical argument is not to be overlooked, since it carries with it the double advantage of disproving the Atonement to be contrary to other facts and laws well recognized among men, and of requiring this dispensation of the divine government to correspond with others. If all mediate instrumentality, all vicarious suffering, be unknown, be denounced; if it be an idea foreign to all our minds, and abhorrent to all our observations; we might, with some semblance of reason, demur to the first statement of such a doctrine. For in reasoning upon analogy, we adduce and collate all that we know and experience; this is but an investigation of things as ordered or suffered by the righteous disposals of Almighty authority: and when we gather our illustrations

from other parts of that government to uphold and explain the sacrifice of the cross, we must remember that those other parts were made to reflect that sacrifice, and not that such sacrifice was accommodated to them. Analogy respects a system of operations, a constitution of things, which we contend must coincide with an *event* to which they all are tributary, and for the sake of which they alone have any existence.

Now it is most obvious that while we believe the Deity acts and speaks by the mediation of Jesus Christ, and employs his intervening agency, a world of contrivancies on the same principle unfolds itself. Every benefit we enjoy is derived through some indirect channel. Being, sustenance, education, we receive from parents, benefactors, and teachers. The advantages of society are thus circuitously transmitted through all its countless links. So in the lower kingdoms of nature there is established a uniformity of what we call effects, arising out of what we term specific causes. Farther and farther we may trace the succession, in agents more remote and secondary, in means more subordinate and inconsequential. God gives and arranges all by this employment of power, and vehicles of power, in constant dependence upon his control, and in unerring subserviency to his purpose. If this should appear to us a characteristic and law of his general conduct, it is an argumentative presumption, and a natural expectation, that he will not, in such most glorious instance, vary his order and depart from his consistency.

The Death of Christ differs, however, from all those prepossessions which have raised themselves, upon a review of what is simply an interposition of ministries and means. It is much more; it involves the principle of *one suffering for another*. But this notion, abstracted from our particular subject, does not seem to shock the opinion and general sense of mankind. The annals of patriotism glow with bright names of self-sacrificing

renown. Present good has been surrendered by a generous disinterestedness for the welfare of posterity. These models we admire, these heroic deeds we applaud. And when we look more minutely into the framework of every human community, we cannot fail to notice that almost all its good is purchased by necessary or voluntary inconvenience and pain. The parent denies himself repose and many a comfort for the better equipment of the child in the race of life; the child has often to repay the care which watched his infancy, by debarring himself of recreation which labour requires and competency might command. The artisan, to secure our dwellings and to clothe our persons, submits to occupations which shorten his days upon the earth. What are the original curses which still affect our nature? What is the cost of every life? What is the doom of its struggling support? And there are occasions when we should be accounted unnatural, did we not endanger health and existence for others. What parent would not extend the living shield of his bosom to protect his child? What Christian would refuse to die rather than forswear his profession? And, consequently, it revolts nothing that we are habituated to see, nothing which we are instructed to approve, when a representation is made to us that the greatest possible happiness is apportioned by an infliction of suffering, and a self-devotement of philanthropy.

The fact, that innocence often incurs the consequences of guilt, is apparent, and proves that the actual case in question is by no means unknown to the present constitution of things. It is sufficient answer to the charge of any peculiar principle, that every observer is equally required to explain a similar one in surveying the history of communities and the progress of events. It is no more the embarrassment of revealed, than of natural, religion.

There is another class of parallelisms which is more distinct and substantive. We discover them in the field

of Holy Scripture. Is the representative principle avowed in it? This is an important inquiry, because it must determine whether Revelation, which is so conformable with the external arrangement, be also consistent with itself? Is it uniformly sustained by that volume, or abruptly introduced to serve a special purpose? In some instances we learn that, without mediatory suffering, an honour is put upon mediatory excellence. For the sake of the righteous, the wicked have been spared. Ten just men would have reprieved Sodom. "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake." How often does "David's sake" turn away wrath from Judah. God gave to Paul all them who sailed with him. For the elect's sake the days of trouble are shortened. The earth cannot be hurt, neither the sea, nor the trees, until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. But there is a more determinate application of the principle. Facts are presented in which there occurs the inverted relation of guilt and impunity, innocence and suffering. The child of David dies for his father's sin. The crimes of Manasseh are avenged, long after he was buried in the garden of Uzza. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom," said Jehovah to his ancient people, "Ethiopia and Seba for thee." He declares that He will "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." It is not his ordinary tenor of conduct, but an exception to it, when He decrees, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." It is therefore a general principle of Revelation, whose tone vibrates through the whole.

It is no part of our present duty to vindicate such course of procedure, and such avowal of purpose: the simple motive for adducing them is, to show that the principle does not innovate on any known law, or war with any sacred oracle.

2. Another argument may be added to this preparatory suggestion. It is merely mooted as negative. But the hypothesis is, that God does please to pardon. Now against a substitutionary principle, to which every analogy answers, and to which no authority is opposed, it is objected that it is superfluous, inasmuch as there are plainer and precedent means equally efficacious. Why, it is asked, fix upon a remedy foreign and doubtful, when every man possesses in himself the means of atonement and moral reparation? Why seek, in a punitive and vicarious act, that which is always at hand and in our power? Repentance is the alleged resource. It is affirmed that it is deprecatory and propitiating: that the present altered state of mind debars the very justice which would resent its former guilt and pravity.—But it does not appear that there is any thing in the divine government to favour these positions. The consequences of an action prevail long after the action has been performed, and equally long after it has been made the subject of a bitter regret. Compunction and remorse have wrung scalding tears from the eye, have pierced the heart with bleeding wounds. We "possess the iniquities of our youth." The arrears of former wickedness pursue us. Here is the sign of continued punishment, though there is the proof of sincere penitence. So far, therefore, every primary notice falsifies the conclusion.—Nor does it seem reasonable that sorrow for offence should be accepted as a compensation for it. Between man and man, individually considered, this may sometimes be allowed: but when the laws and institutions of society are affected, it is never permitted. And our sins have their most serious evil in their invasion of an universal order and fitness, in their attack upon Infinite Purity and Authority, —so that however they may injure our neighbour and ruin ourselves, we may warrantably exclaim: "Against Thee, Thee only, have we sinned!" And if repentance

produce future amendment, that amendment only falls into the duty of that future; it can only supply the season as it arises, and meet the obligation as it falls. There is nothing retrospective in it, and cannot make it less true that we have hitherto done wrong. Where is the availableness to expurgate that wrong? What power is there to reverse its fruits? Still if any doctrine be more explicitly the dictate of natural religion than another, it is that on all crime ensues a punishment. Whatever we sow, we also reap. It may not be an immediate issue, but at last it comes in its own appropriate form. There is a God who judgeth in the earth, if we only follow the silent operations of his undeclared will. But if repentance were the appeasement, then these strong links of succession must be broken, the ordinary pains of demerit must be remitted, and the vial of wrath cease to pour itself out upon them who mourned the past. The retributive character of the divine ordinations is *not* changed, and the entail is still on them whose dispositions and lives have been so greatly reformed. There is every disproof, in short, of the efficacy ascribed to repentance and subsequent obedience, not only in Scripture, but in the province which reason loves to claim as its own, and to subject to its investigation. And it is unnecessary, therefore, for us to show that such repentance is inadequate to the extent and malignity of the crimes which it professes to deplore; and becomes their serious aggravation, when it assumes the power to expiate them! He who receives the Atonement weeps not to wash away his sins, but because they are washed away he weeps!

3. The use of similitudes is a very common and salutary practice in the work of instruction. It arouses attention, impresses memory, facilitates apprehension, and builds up in the mind a system of ready and pertinent illustrations. They constitute the source of all language, the basis of all writing; and what was suited to the

infant history of our species, is still as adapted to the tender and unformed faculties of our infant nature. The fables and hieroglyphics of our childhood, have not lost their power to entertain and discipline our maturer judgments and riper years.

And it was in this manner that God addressed the fathers of our race. He took them by the hand, and led them from step to step of knowledge. He made one thing tell of another. He put a sign, and taught a conception: he appealed to the sense, that he might reach the intellect. Upon such a principle the *ceremonial law* was constructed. It was a repository of types and representations. It drew the outline, and cast the shadow, of "good things to come." "It was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." Sacrifice was its characteristic institute. The altar was continually heaped with victims, and flowed with streams of blood. Sin was confessed over the offering, and the sinner found in it an atonement for his trespass. The whole was certainly prelusory, and it was "not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." It is an idea which strikes in with no prepossession of man, and which finds nothing akin to it in his feelings. Tradition can account for its all but universal influence, but only a divine mandate for its original practice. There will be no hesitation with the Christian, that this expense of treasure and beastial life had a special reference to the death of the cross. That death is denominated a sacrifice. We believe that it was absolutely one, that it was such exclusively, that according to the strictest value of words, and the most rigid exaction of sentiments, it was a sacrifice of atonement. The alternative appears to us to be, that all the apparatus of magnificent forms, all the machinery of elaborate details, were unmeaning show and prodigal ostentation.—But we are not ignorant that it is maintained that the death of Christ is only so styled allusively, that it is in accommodation to these ancient models.

The inquiry then, between those who hold the Atonement and those who renounce it, is, whether do the types determine the character of the Saviour's death, or does that death determine the character of the types? Is there the idea of sacrifice in the types because that death was truly sacrificial, or was that death regarded sacrificial in compliance with those types?

Now we ask why sacrifice should have been established at all, if it was incorrect to apply its meaning to that which it was established to introduce? Why should the perplexing error be injected into the human mind? Why should the stumbling-block be needlessly thrown in our path? Why was a figure sanctioned which all of the reality must disown and contradict? Why was the idea, perpetuated in every variety of manner, and under every pledge of solemnity, to be thrown away, to be denied, to be repudiated, at the very first moment it could be of use and application? Were the sacrifices of four thousand years required to prove that the death of our Saviour was not a sacrifice?

But there is another answer: the type must agree with the antitype, or the intended thing. It was established to forestal and indicate it. It might not be "the very image," but it is a close resemblance. It would defeat every intention were it otherwise, or were it less so than its own inferior nature compelled. Whatever in it is faint and dim, the *original* must define and illumine. That which "cometh after is preferred before." The homage is from the sign to the signification. Yet, in defiance of this simple rule, is the Saviour's death divested of a sacrificial import, is allowed the figurative name only in deference to particular ceremonies, is adjudged to have expiatory virtue only as a poetic trope! The Jewish altar bows not down to the Cross, the Cross stoops to the Jewish altar! The Shadow depends not on the Substance for its size and form, but the Substance attributes its size and form to the Shadow!

4. The *peculiar character* of the sufferings endured by our Lord, supplies another argument in favour of their vicarious intention.

Two facts must be assumed; indeed into any controversy touching them it would be a shock to all piety, and a debasement of all reason, to enter. We deign not to dispute with the blasphemers or maniacs who could contest them. They lie at the basis of the whole argument. The *first* is the sinlessness in fact, and the impeccability in nature, of Him who is the "Most Holy," and "separate from sinners." The *second* is, the inalienable complacency of the Father in the Son, throughout the progress of his entire series of Mediatorial acts and humiliations when "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." There was no taint of human corruption, no sentiment of divine displeasure; his person was the brightest perfection in the universe, and his work an expression of the richest benevolence which was ever diffused amidst its realms.

These sufferings were of the most extraordinary severity and pressure. "He was the Man of sorrows." They were on the body, on the mind, on every relationship and every stage of life. Strange is "the hour when he rejoices in spirit:" but it is a common thing for him to weep. In how many forms, from how many directions, with how many aggravations, did his sore travail oppress him! He sank in deep waters, they went over his head, they came in unto his soul.

These sufferings were voluntary, or the results of voluntary engagements. "He gave himself for us." "He set his face steadfastly" to the scene on which "he laid down his life of himself." And this is an uncommon circumstance, since "our time is in the hand of God," "with him are all our ways," and it is for him "to kill and make alive." To seek death is to undervalue the gift of life, and may be as suicidal an act as if we were to break open its

sanctuary. But certainly such a self-disposing power is a most singular right, and perfectly at variance with the conditions of created being.

These sufferings were required by the most inevitable necessity. In harmony, however mysterious, with his freest agency and fullest choice, there was a moral and decretive obligation which he obeyed. And when we "remember Christ Jesus," His obedience to this two-fold obligation is readily explained,—the one is but the assent of his nature, the other is but the announcement of his will. Such necessity is his love of right, and his superiority to any violation of it. Therefore it is written that he "ought to suffer," that "he must be slain," that he was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," that the perpetrators of his crucifixion only "did whatsoever the hand and the counsel of God determined before to be done." But this is a stress which it is by no means common to lay upon any human calamities: nor can we conceive a case in which the cup of trial could not possibly be allowed to pass from us.

These sufferings were attributed to an immediately divine infliction. No adversity "springs out of the dust." But while there is "no evil but the Lord hath done it," and the "Most High ruleth among the children of men," there is a directness of purpose and conduct on His part in the history of the Saviour's humiliations unknown to any other. He "doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men,"—"it *pleased the Lord* to bruise him, He hath put him to grief, He hath made his soul an offering for sin." Unless in proportion to the injustice of punishment is the divine pleasure in executing it, and according to the innocence of the subject is the divine delight over his extremest pains, we must necessarily conclude that there is a specialty in the present facts which alone can make them righteously defensible.

These sufferings were accompanied by the deepest depres-

sion of feeling. To his bodily sufferings perhaps some mortal agonies may be compared. In these he has been approached by men. One exception must be made, those bodily sufferings which were excited by mental griefs, which no bosom ever harboured save his own. This was his bloody agony in the garden, this was his unexpectedly hastened death upon the cross. And it is beneath these conflicts of infernal assault, these depths of dread reflection, these visitations of divine infliction, that we mark a sinking, a recoil, a deprecating tone, a very despair. Such was his cry of parting life when his head bowed as much in dejection as in death. Bearing in memory who he was, and His own exemption from all that can barb an upbraiding mind, and lend scorpions to an accusing conscience,—we may justly inquire, why conscious rectitude and goodness did not preserve his brow from furrow, his voice from complaint, his heart from desolation? And still may we persist to ask, why martyrs should exhibit their high resolve, their glorious magnanimity, their dint of energy, and their rapture of meekness, when he would, though but for a moment, evade the necessity of the dire woes then beginning to gather around him, and the final stroke so presently to fall? Where was their collected serenity, when he was "sore amazed?" Where was their triumphing courage, when he "was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?" The temper of endurance sufficiently decides that the sufferings were unequalled in their *character* and *design*, as well as in their poignancy and magnitude.

These sufferings indicate traces of a penal and judicial impress. Affliction may be kind by being corrective, but a fearful style of language is employed to denote acts of retributive wrath. The Cup! "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup and the wine is red; it is full of mixture: and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink

them." And never does Scripture ascribe to it one healing ingredient,—it is "the cup of trembling," "the cup of fury," overflowing with "the wine of astonishment." The Sword! Jehovah will "whet his sword," "it cannot be quiet," "it is filled with blood," it will "plead with all flesh." It is the instrument of devouring slaughter, and the symbol of inexorable law. And yet these are the tokens of that conduct which is pursued towards the Holy Jesus. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." But if there be any thing punitive in these sufferings, it can have no purport of personal demerit; they must be in some manner wielded against sin, which has only an accidental and temporary charge upon Him who now is made responsible for it. And if "forsaken," if in such abandonment all the unmitigated consequences of sin be concentrated, if there be all its wormwood and all its curse,—that "beauty of the Lord," that "light of His countenance," could only be eclipsed because the Immaculate Sufferer was brought into an unnatural relation, and beheld in a transposed sphere.

These sufferings, therefore, could not terminate on Him who bore them. When we sum up the preceding remarks, and connect them with those final causes which all divine acts must exhibit, we can reach no other conclusion than that a retribution, so extreme, so voluntarily encountered, so indispensable, so immediately dealt by heaven, borne with such dejection and consternation, flaming with such brands of penal wrath,—could only be relative and impersonal; regarding some extrinsic due and represented interest. For if that retribution be exacted upon him strictly considered in himself, it is *unjust*. It would fail, therefore, in every end of moral government, neither encouraging virtue nor deterring vice. It must confound right and wrong, besides annulling all the sanctions which

depend upon their different consequences. It could only destroy each incentive to excellence, and embolden guilt still further to presume. But as these alternatives are glaringly absurd and morally impossible, it is a position which establishes and balances itself, that all the sufferings of Christ are substitutionary in their cause, benevolent in their motive, and sacrificial in their effect. As it is the part of sound philosophy to gather up all facts independently of any particular system, and equally so, after the induction, to receive the one principle which can explain and harmonize them all,—so we bring into a scheme all the circumstances of Him who "was wounded for our transgressions," and having shown the inconsistency of every other solution, adopt the most worthy and satisfactory principle of expiation.

5. In an argument which respects a pure discovery of revelation, it would not be decent to omit all reference to those authorities and proofs which Scripture contains. It is much to find the general idea and assumption of the inspired volume; but we may be assured that we shall often discover the same in explicit sentences and naked declarations. These fill its range and determine its scope. Selection is the difficulty.

"For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Can contrast be more marked, appointment more plain, and process more determinate?

"Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Is it possible so to overlook the construction of the passage as not to allow that Christ is here intended to die for us, as we might die instead of a righteous and philanthropic man?

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." This is surely the strongest mode of stating his assumption of our penal liabilities.

"Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Can a vicarious idea be more distinctly announced?

Then we may reason upon the concurrent testimonies to the efficacy of the Saviour's *blood*,—a sacrificial term,—a term propounded always in connection with sin, or the covenant which remembers it no more,—and always to be explained by that great axiom, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." "This is my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins." "It can purge the conscience from dead works." "It cleanseth from all sin." "He is a propitiation through faith in his blood." "We have redemption in his blood." "He has sanctified the people with his own blood." "He has washed us from our sins in his own blood." Is this a fortuitous description? Or is it a metaphor common to writers of the most different order of mind and style of composition?

The nicest attention to the use of the preposition selected by the sacred penmen, where they would inform us that Christ died *for* our sins, and gave himself *for* us, will satisfy the biblical student that substitution can only be intended. It need only be added that the case governed by that preposition,—being dependent as a question of choice upon the particular shade of meaning in the writer's mind, the one sense requiring one and the other another,—ascertains the most definite employment of it.*

* The force and perspicuity of the Greek prepositions are proverbial. The Apostles could not generally pretend to erudite scholarship; but the gift of tongues, and the afflatus by which they spoke and wrote, would certainly secure the most appropriate expressions. Paul was doubtless acquainted with some of the Attic models. Now, one of these parts of speech seems commonly selected by the New Testament. Προ, δια, περι, αμφι, and even occasionally προσ, would have conveyed the idea of being for the benefit, or on the account, of the parties concerning whom they are affirmed. Αντι would be the next in conveying the impression of "instead," "in room," of another. But it seldom rises higher than *succession, sequence,* of the corresponding kind and natural order. Υπερ is the preposition most commonly used in this connection. Its primitive meaning is that of elevation, which is

And in conformity to this view of the Saviour's crucifixion is the common method of stating it. It is not casually, incidently, but systematically and advisedly, described as an *offering*, a *sacrifice*, a *ransom*, a *propitiation*, a *redemption*, a *reconciliation*, a *making peace*, a *saving from wrath*, a *taking away of sin*. This does not appear the most simple manner to narrate a mortal's death, or to illustrate a martyr's victory. And to this may be added his invested characters,—He is a Saviour, a Mediator, a Deliverer, a Priest, a Surety, a Minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. Nothing can be more intelligible than that such expositions should be given of his work, such descriptions of his character, if an Atoning Victim: nothing more incredible, if his purpose were only didactic.

6. There is an *implication* in Scripture equal to these avowals. And it is strange that any should so far tamper with its spirit as to speak of the Saviour's death with a disposition to degrade it. If any theme be secured by its own nature from ribald taunt and profanation, it is that awful fact. Will it be believed that it has been a current maxim with some, that it has no importance but as necessary to his resurrection, and that it is only useful as preliminary to it? That another and a loftier conception of it belongs to the sacred volume and the christian economy, we need not pause to prove. Every thing vindicates its rank of infinite worth and glory.

This is to be observed when the first preachers of the Gospel announce themselves. They are "dead with

preserved in the notion of what we believe its scriptural intention. The representing party is raised above, over,—he surmounts and overcomes the natural order of punishing the represented. The English reader may perceive this distinction in the following text:—"Christ hath once suffered for (περι, about, because of) sins; the just for (υπερ, in the place of) the unjust." This is the invariable terminology of the New Testament. I. John ii. 2, introducing a *particular* view of the atonement, and omitting mention of the conscious agents, is no exception.

Christ," they are "crucified with him." Their language, because each sentiment, is determined by it. They seem entranced into a sublime abstraction and ecstasy, "knowing nothing among men save Jesus Christ even the Crucified One." They would, under the most solemn forbiddance, only glory in the Cross. This was their favourite contemplation; it gave fixedness to their thought, and fervour to their feeling; it formed the secret of every charm they employed, and the spell of every influence they commanded; it was their "early visitation and their last."

Nor can we fail to notice that these first preachers of christianity never refer to the death of the cross as *one* of the expedients by which the evangelical blessings are secured. It is not blended with miracle, teaching, and precept. It is set forth the exclusive means of salvation. "He his ownself bare our sins in his own *body on the tree.*" "He *gave his life* a ransom for many." And this is so remarkable, that his present mediatorial existence, his "power of an endless life" of priesthood, is contrasted with his death, and his death of blood. "Much more then, being now justified by *his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his *life.*" We are indeed informed by pseudo-christians that He is our Saviour by correcting our errors and by encouraging our virtues: it is enough that the Saviour himself, and the inspired interpreters of his mission, make our salvation depend upon one fact, and that is the *incarnate crucifixion,* "the body of his flesh by death," a sacrifice "offered once for all,"—to which the resurrection, without adding any thing to render it complete, stands simply related, as a seal of its truth, and a proclamation of its efficacy!

The importance attached by the first Christians to this *death,* is seen in a sensitive delicacy whenever its singu-

larity is likely to be confounded, or its virtue to be lost. "Was Paul crucified for you?" was his own indignant remonstrance. Not for a moment could he brook, not that the mistake should be entertained, but that there should be any feeling of partizanship towards him which, by possibility, unbelievers might so interpret. And in the same manner there is nothing which they so much deprecated, nothing at which they so deeply shuddered, as any compromise of the atonement on the cross. "Then," said they, unable to conceive of an equal catastrophe, "then Christ is dead in vain!"

The kingdom of the Lord Jesus administered by him on earth, sanctifies and protects the memory of his death. His Church retains, in contradistinction to its general spiritualism of service, the symbols of his broken body and outpoured blood. This was the one point of which He required the remembrance; this is *our* distinctive badge and profession. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do *shew the Lord's death* till he come." Therefore from the night in which he was betrayed, have these tokens confirmed the faith, and nourished the piety, of them who love to confess their Crucified Master; and these tokens shall continue to illustrate and cheer the faithful until the night when He shall come with "his sign in the clouds of heaven." "One generation shall praise and declare this mighty act to another." But can we escape the conclusion that the *death* which receives such signal honour, and such everduring commemoration, contains in itself elements of wonder and interest which well authorize this homage?

And should it be thought that this *particular* of the Saviour's history, is only suited for man in his present condition, and only held back from obsoleteness upon earth,—we may ascertain whether the heaven of life, purity, and immortality bear its impression, and admit its memorial. Though we could never learn, from our-

selves, "what passes there," a disclosure has been made to us. And he who should be suddenly rapt by a translation from the foot of the cross into the midst of "the things above," would not be conscious of a different thought or a successive feeling. All would be illuminated with a stronger splendour, and all be regarded with an intenser sensibility, but this would be the only change. The "heavenly things themselves have been purified" by this Sacrifice. Hark to the celestial song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Admire those robes of white, —"the souls of them that were slain for the word of God," are among the throng who wear them,—but they owe no brilliance to the death, they derive no glory from the triumph, of martyrdom,—they are "made white in the blood of the Lamb." But will allusion be borne to the endurance and shame of the cross, in a direct ascription to Him who is the Life? "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood!" Or will not every memento of that death be henceforth studiously avoided, —each association repelled, each scar effaced? "Lo! stands the Lamb as he had been slain"!! Heaven is no place for flight from the recollections of Calvary! It is filled with the apparatus and monuments of atonement! Its atmosphere is brightened by it, redolent of it, vocal with it! There is its most sacred recess and depository! There is its shrine! Not one thought in the crowd of eternal ideas, not one note in the compass of eternal anthems, not one moment in the round of eternal ages, can there be, but refers to "Christ crucified," and but evidently "sets Him forth before the eyes" of the redeemed "crucified among them." With all its "many mansions," but one sympathy pervades the circuit of heaven; nor shall he find a place in one of them who "hath counted the blood of the covenant a *common thing!*"

So far, then, we have proceeded; and must maintain that when we examine Scripture, its records of primitive

christianity, its visions of eternal bliss,—an injudicious prominence, an unmeaning peculiarity is attached to the sufferings of Christ,—the stress laid upon them is most unwarranted, the regard challenged to them is most redundant,—save that they be strictly sacrificial!

7. The argument requires a further expansion. For it may be doubted by some whether we *do* increase the value of this *death* by clothing it with an expiatory character. They may conceive this is a corruption of its simple dignity. It, therefore, remains for us, in this scriptural argument, to press those views of it which are scripturally avouched, and to show that these can only answer to the idea of a great sacrificial transaction.

It will hardly be denied that if man be in that fallen state, in that predicament of guilt and depravity, which render his eternal punishment just; if he has wholly strayed, and is utterly lost; that something more than instruction is necessary to restore him, that new and external relations must be established in his favour. Without begging the question, this must be the best interposition for us, the most efficacious remedy. But we cannot think it doubtful that the Scripture does state such facts. "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "Our righteousnesses are filthy rags." "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." Something done for them will, in the apprehension of the most ordinary reason, be a thousand times better than a communication of knowledge, or an exemplification of conduct. Nor, unless that be *done* which removes certain disqualifying circumstances, can the sinner make an approach to moral recovery or spiritual bliss.

The Gospel is *glad tidings*. It tells of pardon, life, and peace. Let us conceive a case. A criminal is in the

hands of the executioner. Before his swimming eye there stretches a curious, it may be a pitying, crowd. Perfect stillness reigns over the living mass, while the hideous preparations of death proceed. There is a murmur on its outer verge! A messenger, proclaiming his errand lest he should come too late, forces, finds, a way through its densest centre! Good news resounds from every voice! The scaffold is attained! The half-dead wretch revives! How fires that but now glazed eye! How acute becomes that lately insensate ear! And now the rapturous information, at the first report of which the stroke was stayed, is more precisely unfolded! What! if after all, it were but a copy of the law that criminal had transgressed, and of the sentence he had incurred? Could there be a more fiendlike sport with anguish? Was mockery necessary to make that cup of ignominy and violence overflow? And yet, if the Christian redemption justifies its glad tidings by a recapitulation of our duty and an enforcement of our accountability, it raises a hope only to disappoint it; and opens our eye to the prospect of life, only to embitter the agony of its close in death. It is a pretension of mercy, but a thing of despair! Let, however, something be conveyed to us in the shape of a pardon; let it be proved that the pardon is based upon a moral satisfaction; that the satisfaction has been provided by mercy in consistent regard to justice; that a deliverance has been wrought out for us,—and we hail it as "glad tidings of great joy." It is "passing from death unto life."

But it is a doctrine of inspiration that the death of Christ has not only an influence future to its occurrence, but that which is retrocessive. Faith in Him who "was to come," the believing recognition in type and vision of "his day," the persuasion of the "promises when afar off," was "counted for righteousness." The "Gospel was preached unto Abraham." So true is this, that the inspired writer is content to say, "unto us was the Gospel

preached *as well as* unto them."* "They first," that is, "they *before* trusted in Christ." But if you interpret the religion of the Gospel into a mere instrument of enlightening the human mind, of weaning it from idolatry, of inciting it to morality,—how can it have this reflex power so expressly ascribed to it? How could it retrieve the errors and check the mistakes of former generations? Whatever its subsequent course, it could not throw back a ray of intelligence upon those large portions of our race which were long since swept among the dead. Here is the problem—this view only perplexes it. But if the death of Christ be sacrificial, if the Gospel be founded upon it, then may an *anticipated deed*, certain as though it was already transacted, be accepted in the sinner's room, and be attributed to him for his benefit,—a constant provision and groundwork of acceptance, and always a competent object of belief. Being infallibly sure, it may be equally available for all old and for all future time. Its delay was but "the forbearance of God," and need not interrupt the "remission of sins that are past." "By means of his death as the mediator of the new testament, there is the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament."† Destroy this *character* of his death, and you render its prior efficacy impossible: admit it, and the "Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world?" And in this sense only can we understand those expressions which relate to the infinite munificence of Divine Love in the *gift* of Jesus Christ, to the infinite rigour of Divine Justice in not *sparing him*, to the infinite delight of Divine Complacency in the "sweet-smelling savour of his offering and sacrifice." And it speaks much for the superiority of this view over every other that opposes it, that, when the atonement is denied, the dignity of the Saviour is also rejected,—proving that in common apprehension the one is the higher work which Incarnate Deity

* Hebrews iv. 2. † Hebrews ix. 15.

must undertake, and that the other is a lower one which a human prophet can accomplish. Any conception of that death, in comparison with the idea of atonement, is like bringing for "gold brass, for silver iron, for brass wood, and for iron stones!" It is a certain exchange of ever-sinking depreciations!

There is a remaining branch of discussion which pertains to the *principle* on which the Atonement was offered: the principle of substitution.

III. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO DEFEND THE STRICT RIGHT AND PERFECT EQUITY OF THAT ARRANGEMENT WHICH DEVOLVES OUR PERSONAL LIABILITIES UPON JESUS CHRIST AS OUR SACRIFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE.

In ordinary contracts between man and man, an independent party may become, by his own consent, responsible for the obligations and pledges of another. None can think it unjust if Judah be voluntarily detained in the room of his younger brother; or that Paul should make himself accountable for the debt and wrong of Onesimus.

In moral connections, it is admitted to be much more difficult of application. But this seeming difficulty chiefly arises from a false supposition. It is imagined that the sinful act of the man is imputed to the Saviour, which is impossible,—nothing can constitute it any other's act. Our depraved conduct, whatever is the *evil* of sin, can never belong to any history but our own, or attach to any being but ourselves. It is unphilosophical, it is irrational, that any separation can take place between what we have done and our doing of it. It is the most necessary of truths that the past cannot be obliterated or reversed. It is not in the power of omnipotence to make any fact unreal, any truth false. What has been, has been; what is, is. But there may be a *quality* of sin, such a quality as has respect to an *external relation*, abstracted from it. The process of mind is as simple as to detach colour from

form. That quality in the present instance, is guilt or liability to punishment. If there were no law, the same deed might be performed; it might possess all its inherent folly and unfitness; but it would not be a guilty, or in other words, a *punishable* deed. The punishment depends upon the law, the law upon the lawgiver, and the lawgiver upon infinite reason and purity. "The Lord is our lawgiver." Substitution therefore leaves "the things done in the body" just where they were, and only could be,—but it undertakes that the obnoxiousness to consequences, so far as those consequences are not of sin's own nature but of the government under which it is committed, shall be displaced and shifted.

Another improper view has often embarrassed the subject. It is argued, or, perhaps more truly, *felt*, that Divine Justice is an attribute of unrelenting sternness, of absolute vindictiveness against the offender. It has nothing, we maintain on the contrary, that regards a personal aim. It hates no creature, nor seeks his ruin. It concerns not itself with the person but the crime. If the obligation to suffer be separated from him, there is no further exposure. Its office is to protect right, thus to ensure happiness, and only to punish for the sake of enforcing this state of moral well being. It is not implacable resentment, it is the care which embraces all the interests of the universe. Let the law be upholden, and any scheme which does this is consonant to its nature, and may obtain its sanction. Moral righteousness is the love of all things!

The objection to the principle is considerably heightened by the impediments which obstruct it in the relations of human life. It is allowed that no civil commonwealth could admit the transfer of capital punishment, though some cases may be conceived in which even this would invest a government with more apparent impartiality and terrible disinterestedness. Yet it is frankly acknowledged

to be, in our circumstances, neither a feasible or practicable commutation. But why? not that, if all the parties were capable of acting for themselves, it would be abstractedly unjust,—but because neither the laws of God and man suppose a man's life to be his own. And then society would suffer were the worthy blotted from the living, and the wicked spared in their room. But it must always be remembered that these are groundless scruples against the interposition of Christ, for it was not "possible that he should be holden of death." He arose with greater power from the grave, to benefit them for whom he died. There was no subtraction of life and influence from the great moral system. We go not to his grave to weep there as though he saw corruption,—"he dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him." We are not weighed down by a possible suspicion that our salvation has been the cause of lessening his influence or abating his joy. Through us he has not been lost to others. His reward is founded upon his death. "Wherefore God hath given him a name above every name." We "look on him whom we have pierced and mourn," "but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." Our gain is not his injury. We live not but by his life. We "eat not the sacrifices of the dead:" we "drink not the wine of the condemned!" "He was raised again on account of our justification!"

Substitution is not *unjust*, if the penalty of the law be inflicted; nor *pernicious*, but the very reverse, if a stronger mark of its sincerity, and a more powerful expression of its even-handed justice be given by the moral system which superintends it,—taking a more signal retribution on the sin, by wreaking it on one infinitely superior to the sinner!

Christ thus represents us, and enters into that fixed inevitable obligation to punishment which we had incurred by our revolt. In doing this, he in no way mixes himself

with our sinfulness, proves himself most averse from it, is the object of infinite complacency in his work of expiating it, and stands at the most abhorrent extreme from it while enduring its appalling curses! Still as this is not the common and natural order of punishment, as it necessitates an arrangement somewhat extra-judicial, as many difficulties beset it which can only be obviated by a most singular combination of favourable circumstances,—it may not be uninteresting to inquire into the power which exists to allow it, into the occasion which may be supposed to justify it,—the rules which direct its permission, and the checks which limit its operation.

At what time, how far, under what conditions, is then substitution admissible?*

1. There must be a moral equivalent.

It is only a question of principle, and not of physical comparison. For in the very supposition of the case, the transferred punishment cannot be the *same*. The case is that of an innocent party suffering for the guilty. But the innocent, in such an act of noble benevolence, cannot feel regret, shame, remorse, or fear. Every thing approves him, he approves himself.—And the present nature of such a case is *expiatory*. Now, no man can expiate his offence. Punishment, personally borne, is not expiation. The character does not cease to be implicated when the penalty is spent. The sentence of death may be inflicted, it is the last retribution of earthly governments; but the

* The writer was a good deal surprised to perceive in the posthumous Sermons of the Rev. Robert Hall, a train of remarks so very similar to these of his own pages. He preached the substance of this Discourse at the Lecture in Heckmondwike, 1825. He was then solicited, by several of his brethren, to let it go to press. Perhaps it would not have now appeared, but that it might seem that he then declined from the consciousness of plagiarism. There is sufficient disparity in the topics, though the amount of numerals is the same, to show that his argumentation is independent: who could, indeed, hope to compare, in thought or style, with that most illustrious Author?

crime remains what it was, and all its consequences endure long after the execution.—And in sacrificial expiation there is a *victim.* Necessarily it must be different from them who have confessed their sins over it. Were it one of them, it could not be a proxy for them.—And by parity and greater force of reasoning, it must follow that our Lord Jesus Christ was perfectly unsusceptible of conscious demerit, of painful repentance; could not be the object of displacency with heaven, nor feel a sense of having injured any being of earth. All that punishment of sin which is but its evolved consequence, which springs out of its very properties, he could never know. The bitter and keen mortification which is engendered of itself, could never weigh upon his spirit. To all this scath and blast, he was "the green tree," inconsumable,—like that of Midian amid the lambent play of the enwrapping flame. How then can He supply an indemnity which, by every requirement and necessity, must be so dissimilar to the debt, and to the manner in which, otherwise, the debtor must suffer? How can He exhaust the punishment adjudged against us, and yet fail in so many of its characteristic severities?—It is the consideration of His *person* which explains it all! What a *capacity* for suffering, what an *importance* of suffering, what a *validity* to suffering, does that person command! The effect cannot be less than infinite! And if the subjects of David could say, "but now thou art worth ten thousand of us;" what are our mortal interests when counterpoised by Him before whom "all nations are counted less than nothing, even vanity?" Conceive him in his incarnate nature depressed, buffetted, agonized, crucified,—and *one* may represent *all,* and the *momentary* anguish of such a one may cancel the consequences of *eternity!* O there is a grandeur in his humiliation! He puts the restraint upon his own energies, and the veil upon his own glories! Still he is the Omnipotent and the Self-Existent? "Crucified in weakness,"—"*there is the hiding*

*of his power!"** "Bowing his head in death,"—"he is *the Living Being who was dead!"* † Does not every advantage redound to the cause of justice and the enforcement of law, when creatures, insignificant but for their guilt and their powers of bearing its consequences, are liberated in right of the intervening merit of voluntary suffering endured by Him, whose single pang was greater than the endless gnawing of the worm which never dies though millions of millions were its prey, and who conferred on that suffering a value and a majesty which originate a claim which infinite righteousness is bound to answer and honoured to fulfil. Moral government acquires every thing by the substitutionary transposition of "God manifest in the flesh" for "man whose breath is in his nostrils." It is not only an equivalent, it is a priceless excess: "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake: he hath magnified the law and made it honourable."

2. There must be a strict coincidence established between the representative and those for whom he mediates.

A repugnant class of qualities and circumstances would destroy that equilibrium which is virtually implied and morally obligatory. If there be necessity for condescension, it is to the same abject, or necessity for suffering, it is in the same passive, nature, which has offended. A general resemblance is not to be absolved. *Locality* prefers an urgent claim. Another region would confound the justice of the case, remove it to other associations, and entangle it in other questions. It belongs to this scene, its laws, its precedents, its usages. It has to do with "this building." Transport the action to distant worlds, and it conceals its meaning, and loses its effect. Earth was the theatre of our revolt, and must be of our reconciliation.—*Nature* is another requirement of this substitution. "He who sanctifies, and they who are

* Habak. iii. 4. † Rev. i. 18.

sanctified, must be all of one." A being of different qualities and susceptibilities might so resist the punishment devolved upon him, that the punishment would become void and edgeless. This is conceivable in different ways. The essence might be too ethereal for a capacity of bodily pain. The temperament might be too dull and gross for the consciousness of intellectual and moral griefs. By a nature higher or lower than the one in question, the infliction might be rendered only nominal and apparent,—exquisite refinement on the one hand, and brute stupidity on the other, presenting so many points of repulsion and means of evasion. Man was the sinner, and man must be the victim.—And though some modification of the *penalty* is absolutely necessary, still the suffering must retain much of *kind* and *identity.* Were it to be altered beyond the inevitable difference of the case, it would be taken out of that system which adapts appropriate punishments to particular offences. This is the bond of fitness as well as of denouncement. The connection is established, and must be enforced. An adherence to this order and distinctiveness of sanctions, conduces to deter the transgressor, and support the commonwealth. Sin was committed, and sin must, with a strict correspondence to its specific sentence and tendency, be avenged.—And when Jesus undertook for us, when he put himself into our obligations, these coincidences were exactly observed. In no remote sphere did he thus benevolently interpose. He trod our planet as its native and inhabitant. He was subjected to all its laws and influences. He subsisted on its products, he moved among its scenes, he was affected by its vicissitudes,—respired its air, and obeyed its attraction. "He *came into the world to save sinners.*"—With no nature, unlike our own, did He invest himself. Birth and mortality belonged to it, the nerve foliated through his sensorium, the blood was propelled through his frame,—his tear was humour,

his groan was breath, his heart was flesh. His bosom heaved with emotion, his countenance reflected the inner mind, he spoke by the curious apparatus which gives articulation to sound,—his pores adjusted his animal heat, and at last discharged his sweat of blood. He was taught, he learnt letter by letter,—his mind was seen in all the different functions of thinking, remembering, deciding, abstracting, suggesting,—his feelings were those of love, gratitude, friendship, fear, anger. "*Behold the man!*" "*In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.*"—And all that characterized our *punishment*, apart from the moral reflection and self-upbraidings of the sinner, he "*came in the flesh*" to suffer. Death was the forfeit, so far as it could touch the sensitive life, and dislodge the immortal spirit: his body became thus exanimate and impassive, his soul departed from it. The separation involved in natural death was effected in himself. "He was made a little lower than the angels, *for the suffering of death.*" But there is a more fearful property in death, when the "wages of sin." There is a spiritual, a "second death." As the former is the disseverment of the soul from its body, so this is the disseverment of the soul from its God. It is the dreadful rupture of all merciful relations, and all congenial dispositions. Beginning even now, this state is described as an "alienation from the life of God." "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." "He that made them will not have mercy on them; and He that formed them will show them no favour." And this is the judgment passed upon them: "*Depart!*" "Everlasting destruction *from the presence of the Lord!*" And do the sorrows of Calvary fold within them any portion or counterpart of this terrible doom? Could it be that the Sufferer of the cross felt one darkening, one shade of this dreadful frown fall upon his sinless spirit? When "he tasted death for every man," was this gall and wormwood

mingled in the cup? No remission was made in his favour. Every modification of the retribution but made it more extreme. And this, the tendency of all sin, the punishment included in it as well as decreed against it, was let loose upon him. Deity withdrew, hid its light, abandoned its victim! "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" That cry turned pale the sun, and startled up the dead! That cry proclaimed that sin is "evil and bitter," as it "forsakes God," and as the sinner is forsaken by Him! That cry attested the reality of the imputation which laid our guilt on Christ, and the impartiality of that justice which avenged it on him! Had all the fires of divine wrath been uncovered and pointed against us,—had the carcases of our race been heaped on the ashes of our earth, that pyre would not have so distinctly signalized the certain and the appropriate punishment of "the abominable thing which God hates."

3. There must be an explicit approval, on the part of the government, whose wrongs the substitute proposes to redress.

It may be assumed that such an arrangement cannot be forced upon a government, for it would be competent for any to demand the person of the delinquent. However just it may be to remit the claim, the claim is undeniable. Nor should the consent be reluctantly given, lest it betray a sense of hesitating and painful concession. It must be a voluntary and a cheerful act.—And in applying these observations to the "kingdom which ruleth over all," we cannot but contemplate serious difficulties in the way of its agreement. There was no *precedent*, for however punishment had distributed itself upon the unoffending, they had individual demerit upon which it fell with perfect justice. And then that punishment never reached into eternity, but was only that which is temporary. No "soul" ever really was in another "soul's stead."—There was no *tendency*.

The natural order, the reasonable course is, that all crime shall be visited on the perpetrator,—that he shall be held chargeable in his own capacity of endurance for all denounced against that crime,—that he who is worthy of death should suffer it,—that he should "be delivered to the judge, and that the judge should deliver him to the officer, and he be cast into prison." No other idea could occur to the mind,—guilt being a personal quality, must be resented by a personal infliction.—There was no *provision*. Each literal interpretation of the law decided that the "soul which sinneth, *it* shall die." Though a power is reserved of making the misconduct and punishment of one diffuse itself through a nation and a posterity, his personal relations are not merged in their's, but all alike retain an undivided responsibility. It was not possible that a code which "shewed what God required of man," should contain an enactment authorizing, at any time, a confusion of all distinctions, and an exchange of all obligations.—In the absence of precedent, tendency, and provision, it must rest with Infinite Authority to grant or withhold the permission. But if there be this permission, it must be notably declared: to be effective in its lessons as well as warrantable in its results, all must understand it to be indisputable, and feel it to be unconstrained. And is the expiation of the Saviour's death a measure doubtfully recognized and tardily admitted by the King of men? "The *Lord hath laid* on him the iniquity of us all!" He has furnished the substitute! He has anointed and designated him to his mission! He has "set him forth!" He "gave him!" He "sent him!" He "upholds him!" He "glorifies him!" It is not his sanction to another's act,—it is not his compliance with another's suggestion; it is his own spontaneous, unaided determination! We ask not whether his government approves the transaction, for we only learn the transaction from the manifesto of his government!

4. The act of the substitute should most clearly consist with his own right of conduct and freedom of choice.

It is not for any creature to desert his sphere. We have all a station and a duty: and we can never more than fill the one and satisfy the other. Each instant, each step, has its peculiar accountability.—There can be no moral act, unless it be unconstrained, the result of personal and self-prompted decision.

Now it might be conceived that, in some ordinary circumstances, man might supply the place of man, by greater leisure and superfluous resources, without any departure from his rank, or abandonment of the obligations which cement him in society. It has been already stated that in the extreme case the delegation is inadmissible, because such society has the charge of every member's life, and must encourage, and as far as possible perpetuate, every loyal and virtuous subject's influence. But when we speak of the relations which exist between God and his creatures, the case puts on another complexion. *Man has fallen.* Who then of *creatures* shall, according to our argumentative supposition, represent him? Sinner cannot die for sinner—each perishes for himself. He "dies in his own sin." Shall an angel take on him our obnoxiousness to punishment? Who, in the mean time, shall assume *his* place and execute *his* trust? What can release *him* from those high behests which called him into being, and still urge him in his activities? How could he acquire the independence to pass from orbit to orbit, or to interchange duty with duty? He only, then, can pay the debt who owes none; only can he become our surety who knows neither superior nor responsibility.—And should one be found to make this dread engagement, the proofs of his freest volition must be unequivocal. Indeed the act would declare the perfect heart and ready mind, for of an irresponsible being the motive must be uncontrolled. But there is an importance in the declarations of this entire

acquiescence. And the history of our Divine Lord echoes with consent. "Then said I, Lo I come: I delight to do thy will, O my God." Amidst the scene of the Transfiguration,—the radiant cloud, the celestial ambassage, the awful conversion of Incarnate Divinity into Divine Incarnation,—they "spake of the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem." The sight of the Temple reminds him of his death, and the precious Ointment of his burial. Every event is pervaded with this significance and association. He reads it every where, and always hails it. He is straitened till it is accomplished. He enters Gethsemane to deliver up himself a captive, and passes to Calvary to die the death of a felon: the Lamb of God, unlike the victim which is blinded by its garlands, hastens with fixed eye and conscious pursuit to the altar whose trench is to drink his blood, whose fire is to consume his spirit,—unfaltering and unshrinking, to the last step by which he reaches its ascent, and the last moment in which he is bound to its horns; and there, as he is laid, he invokes the weapon to pierce his heart, and bids the flame, at once approving and avenging, fall!

5. The true ends of the legislative system, under which the substitutionary act occurs, must be answered.

Though it might sometimes be difficult to determine what object many a government proposes, save to pamper an imperial dotard and his parasitical court, every notion of law and sway is most oppositely distant. To uphold the dignity of power beyond the reach of intimidation; to establish justice where suspicion dares not gaze at it; to foster counsels and institutions of peace and amelioration; to neither bear the sword, nor spread the shield, in vain; to knit into the same bond prerogative and freedom, and to place the glory of the rule in the happiness of the people,—these are the great elements of duty and benefit in a proper administration. *Punishment is not an end*, it is only an alternative in the defeat of some legitimate

purpose required by statesmanly wisdom and public good. It must be anticipated, threatened, and provided for,—but it always supposes an injury which it cannot repair. It rather aims to deter than compensate. It involves an injury as well as resents one. It abridges, as it may be, liberty and life. Though its neglect would be *more* pernicious, it can only exercise itself in certain disadvantages, If it can be avoided, without an appearance of betraying the honour of law and compromising the majesty of justice, the good secured is at least in the ratio of the evil prevented.

God has revealed to us a great moral system. His own glory is the end, which is promoted by communicating the largest share of holy felicity among his intelligent creatures. He must be just, for this is merely to allege that he must be consistent with his character and true to his law. Were he less just, to the same point would be the depression of every created interest. However difficult the lesson, the Christian learns it, and "gives thanks at the remembrance of his holiness!" Thus taught, he would not be saved if there was the faintest risk that his salvation could cost divine dishonour. But if it can be achieved in perfect harmony with all that our Sovereign is, and all he has promulgated, we are warranted to say that it is not only competent but pleasant for him to work out such deliverance for us. He will have us know that in "exercising loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness he delights." When these can become conjoint acts there is a greater "delight," if we may be permitted so to speak, than they inspire in their separate qualities. Now if infinite justice be seen more resplendently awful in the death of our substitute than in our own; if a sum of happiness, the purest, and therefore the noblest, be secured to a "great number, which no man can number," all of whom must have been otherwise undone for ever,—no end of the legislative system, beneath whose broad survey

the two-fold benefit is attained, can be thwarted,—each is made more manifest and left more secure. Nor do we decide with any partiality, when we affirm that there is more of the God displayed in the sanction of justice to mercy, than in the consent of mercy to justice. It was never so much at the creature's peril to sin; it was never so fully afforded to the creature to be happy! And the song which pours forth the ecstasy of the saved shall through eternity repeat the strain: "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints!"

6. Some advantage should be gained, in allowing an act of substitution, above any connected with the more common proceeding.

It at once impresses us as a strange and irregular circumstance. It is not the natural step. It is a measure which asks much explanation. The order is inverted, the machinery is stopped. We may, therefore, reasonably seek for some expediency to counterbalance the very general idea founded upon the very general rule, that the person of the delinquent must bear the consequences of his crime.

Let us now conceive the results of guilt avenged upon man. Sooner or later all are "cast into hell!" This catastrophe nothing could have precluded,—it was the requirement of justice,—it was the reward of sin. But no *punishment* is *reparation.* The wrong is done, the insult is offered, and nothing can destroy their substantial character. Sin would have been punished in our perdition, but the injury would have remained. *Those eternal horrors would only have reflected the law eternally disobeyed, and signalized the law-giver eternally dishonoured!* Justice would foresee no term, and therefore no satisfaction. It would be a sacrifice whose "smoke would ascend up for ever and ever;" never consumed, never accepted, "salted with fire," and "the fire not quenched."—And then "the vengeance of eternal fire," would respect finite beings, and

their sufferings could only, through all their progression, be finite. The multitude and the duration could never swell to an infinitude.—There are features, too, of the Divine character which must have continued, in a considerable degree, hidden from us. That justice is goodness we know: the lost, in this conviction, will feel the keenest aggravation of their doom. But *mercy* has in these consequences no scope, in fact no *revelation*. The *fullest* exhibition of the infinite perfections cannot, therefore, be in the condemnation of the human race.—All this would follow from letting things take their course, leaving law and equity to their simplest operations. This course has been interrupted, these operations stayed. Another arrangement has been introduced. It must plead certain advantages over the ordinary case. Now every point will be gained if it rectifies all the disadvantages. And in the substitutionary act there is *reparation* done to the government of God. It has been more honourably maintained than foully violated. The transgressor is made most penitent, and becomes "a new creature." He is put into a train, and blessed with a principle, of endless obedience. But this is independent of any meritorious consideration. The whole of that is in the Substitute! He has obeyed the Law? He has vindicated the Lawgiver! More could not be done. It is *infinite* obedience and *infinite* vindication! That is accomplished which eternity would have been required to do, and which therefore never could be done. And now, too, mercy is disclosed; in combination with all the attributes of eternal excellence are elicited into the brightest light, and impelled into the noblest action; no principle is left without its attestation, and no menace is denied its infliction; an amount of good is aggrandized whose measures are boundless and eternal; and Jehovah is beheld more inflexibly just, and more transparently holy, than any other system of conduct could have enabled him to appear, while he can "rest in love" and "delight in mercy!"

7. Such an arrangement should be incapable of any construction, but as an act of favour and clemency.

It may be imagined that a government might find itself embarrassed by the circumstances of *number* and *extremity*. Its law is clear, its penalty is undebated,—but to punish so *many*, and to such an *extent*, may seem impossible. It might then, so the imagined case may proceed, be induced to accept a principle of substitution. The motive would be divulged in the fact. Here was something not foreseen, the government is open then to the charge of *ignorance*. Here was something not to be *firmly met*, it is then capable of *relenting*. Here was something which could not be *carried into effect*, its executive then is *weak and feeble*. Here was something which shrunk from *going too far*, which deemed itself incapable of *retrieving the consequences*, —it gives signs of *imbecility* and *fear*. It might cheerfully, therefore, accept or originate this method as less difficult and perilous; apprehensive that to deal the blow according to the general regulations, would overreach its strength and endanger its stability. It is to be easily inferred that no government can, with any regard to its consistency and dignity, suffer this interposition, unless all occasion is removed, all pretext is obviated, for speaking lightly of it, and behaving contemptuously toward it, among its subjects or surrounding states.

Now it is an interesting inquiry,—can this provision of a Mediator, on the part of the Divine dominion, be tortured into a readier expedient than individual retribution, —was it introduced to save any hazard or to cover any indecision,—does it present a trace of being an adoption in some unexpected crisis? Oh! how little would it have been of loss to the territories of "Him who built all things," had our globe been blasted, had our species perished! How soon might He have supplied the void by another dwelling, and re-peopled it by another race! How easily might He have "dashed both to pieces like a pot-

ter's vessel!" Thus far, as to power, there arose no dilemma. But when His "own Son" was the mark and sufferer,—when he must expend on his sinless spirit the unalterable blow of condensed wrath against concentrated evil, then "not to spare him," then "to deliver him up," presented an excuse, if it could arise, for a pause and a mitigation. Then, if ever, was the temptation for Justice to soften, for Truth to unbend, for Authority to relax! Such a case, never having occurred, never to occur again, might it not form an exception? might not the universe, rapt into silent awe and trembling with vast excitement, as it gazed on the "Lamb" bound to the Altar, have learnt the lesson of impartial equity in this spectacle of stern preparation, though the sword, "bathed in heaven," had at that moment severed the cord and loosed the victim? It must not be,—"His life was taken from the earth," and his substitution has clearly demonstrated, that, as this was the most awful extreme divine government could ever encounter, so there is none for which it is not sufficient, and is not prepared! And the sinner, while he accepts this reconciliation in the remembrance that God suggested the expedient and empowered the act, perceives how any course must have been less arduous and expensive than this; gathers new proof that justice will punish guilt wherever that .guilt is charged; ascertains, as with an added sense, that this alternative was not a choice of difficulties, but a difficulty in comparison with which every other was a convenience; adores the immutability and grandeur of a law, which, even in that conjuncture, could not abate a claim or check an infliction; and sinks beneath the idea of that mercy which received such a confirmation in selecting such a medium!

8. It should be unfailingly, necessarily, productive of its destined purpose and influence.

Experiments in government are dangerous things. Principles may be so well understood, and may so dis-

tinctly point to some new measures, that in working them out and moulding them, there is nothing rash, there can be nothing alarming, — it is a logical conclusion. But when there are no lights, no guides, it is madness to embark on the deceitful element of speculation. A substitutionary arrangement might be suggested. It might approve itself to justice. On all sides it might be sanctioned. Each party might freely consent. It might even hold out a rational promise of efficiency. But it is a grave venture. Should it fail of success, the door is closed on all future attempt. The unnatural order of things, attracting a singular notice, would, from the event, be pronounced unjustifiable. The warrant, the equipment, the failure, would bring down general scorn. It would be accounted an innovation calculated to embroil every principle, and necessitating its own overthrow.

But how infinitely ruinous had been the abortive termination of that Mediatorial scheme which pressed on our Lord for its accomplishment! While we shudder at the idea of this defeat, we know that it is a supposition only to be momentarily indulged that it may be indignantly resisted. If he had begun and had not been able to finish; if he had bowed beneath the weight; if he had come short of his purpose and our hope,—salvation had been manifestly impossible. If his arm could not bring it, every other must wither in despair. But when the Father appointed him, he said: "Behold my servant whom I *uphold*. He shall not fail nor be discouraged until he bring forth judgment unto *victory*." When he came forth he said: "I know that I shall not be ashamed." His righteousness is "the righteousness of God." No suspense was upon his mind pertaining to the result. His resurrection from the dead, his effusion of the Spirit, his second advent, the happiness of his followers in his presence, his condemnation of the wicked, were themes on which he constantly dwelt. The "glory with which

he was to be glorified," "the joy set before him," he often predestined. His intercession and kingdom prove that he ran not uncertainly, that he was invincible! He "thoroughly pleaded our cause." "He finished the work given him to do."

But there is another way in which failure might attend a mediatory scheme. Let us suppose that it was embraced with a view to a great moral influence. Let us suppose that it was designed to excite fading allegiance; to recall a revolted race to the sense and practice of their duty; to impress the gazing nations with the wisdom and force of a new method of securing to the government which employed it, the love and obedience of its subjects. Were it, after all, to produce the contrary effect, exciting them to jeer its authority and presume upon its forbearance, making it a laughing stock to surrounding empires, egregious would be the confusion of its mistake, and irreparable the mischief of its experiment.—And if the redemption of the Gospel weakened any obligation, lowered any duty,—gave rise to any insinuation of fickleness, or afforded opportunity for any facility of resistance,—fatally would it exceed its intention and contradict its aim. But it is a "kingdom of heaven," a celestial rule, on earth. It bestows life on the sinner, it inflicts death on his sin. Its "grace" inspires "reverence and godly fear." "Our heart fears and is enlarged." "We fear the Lord and his goodness." "The forgiveness is with God that he may be feared." Sin becomes "exceeding sinful:" obedience is the quickening element in which they delight, with native instinct, who are "alive from the dead:" authority assumes its most awful form, and purity its most piercing lustre! Nor is this only the *fitting* influence: the Holy Spirit is given to *secure* it. And in all who "lay hold on this covenant," who welcome this substitution,—a sentiment of loyalty, of gratitude, of devotion, of sympathetic affinity, is im-

planted: and becoming "obedient to the faith," they are "servants to righteousness unto holiness." They know and feel that they "have a master in heaven;" they as "children are joyful in their King;" they confess that "the works of his hands are verity and judgment: all *his commandments are sure.*"

9. Such a regimen, as we now suppose, requires the most solemn publicity in its origin, its acceptance, and its accomplishment.

If there were *carelessness* of manner, it would appear indifferent;—if *haste*, it would seem an undigested afterthought;—if *secresy*, it would be suspected as a thing of shame. The deed must not be muffled, nor the stage be darkened: all must be placed before the keenest inspection, and be explained with the most unreserved ingenuousness. Breaking in upon the regulated practice and natural order, there must be every method taken to avow the fact and expose the reason. Should it be hurried or veiled, perfunctorily or clandestinely precipitated, a jealousy would be entertained of its correct principle, and a distrust of its honourable execution. It should be attended with the most solemn judicial forms, and be announced through the organ of the most reverend authorities.—How inapplicable would any of these accusations be, if they were directed against the interposition of our Redeemer! "Not without an oath was he made priest and therefore a surety." The inauguration was solemnized on a lofty stage, and through a prolonged season! How slow was the procession, and how public the spectacle! How elaborate was the rite! The arrangement was announced on the very day of our fall. Four thousand years repeated the pledge, and, by symbolic action or living picture, rehearsed the event in which it was fulfilled. Prophecy blew the trumpet before it, and "the shaking of all nations" sounded its prelude. Earth now heaved with expectation, then stood still in suspense.

It came not unexpected, and found not man unprepared. It awaited "the fulness of times." "This was not done in a corner."

10. A substitutionary concert could not be suffered, but at distant intervals and on rare occasions.

It is necessary that the distinctions of conduct should be preserved, and its consequences be traced, if we would retain any vivid sense of virtue. But a frequent interchange of parties would tend to confound all such discriminations. If it be permitted to take place, it must be reserved for some signal conjuncture, in which it can neither be pleaded for impunity, nor drawn into precedent. As an exception it may emphatically vindicate its singularity, and yet confirm the necessity of the ordinary course from which it solitarily deviates: it could not become a frequent, not to say an ordinary allotment, without disturbing every relation, and frustrating every law.

The vicarious offering of Christ is decisive of the question, as it can at all occur under the divine government. It need never more be proposed, it can never more be admitted. It is shut up for ever. Nothing similar can it be quoted to sanction. With no other story can it coalesce. It stands like a pyramid in the desert, abrupt and incomparable. Expressions are multiplied to enforce the singleness of the act. "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many." "Not that he should offer himself *often;* for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world." "It is *once for all!*"

Refine upon the most specious objections, conjure up the most hypothetical difficulties, cast them into any form, multiply them by any figure,—conceive any circumstances, combine those circumstances in any manner,—and the fact that Jesus represented our persons and expiated our sins upon the cross, is only opposed by fallacy and anomaly, and rises with a majestic independence in its own truth, purity, and originality!

And this is our "ministry of reconciliation!" He who in every age of the Church has exclaimed, "Behold me, behold me,"* has commissioned us to "cry aloud and spare not,"—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This is the evangelic proclamation! It is an answer to man's most solemn inquiries, it is a supply for the soul's most urgent wants. Sweeter notice never fell on human ear, nor a lovlier spectacle rose on human eye. Alas, how many are there who have never given to him one fixed thought, or felt toward him one definite emotion! We call them now to act a rational part, even should their reason prove itself perverse in his rejection! No conduct is so insane as to spend life in indifference concerning such an object, as to "*neglect* so great salvation!" We advance in our claim: He deserves not only your *attention* but your *admiration.* One believing perception will open to you an archetype of beauty, a standard of excellence, which romance never depicted, and poetry never dreamed. Like the noontide sun, it will fill your whole sphere of vision; and, as when you close the eyelid from that blaze, all mental images seem still teeming with its glow,—so this will pursue the mind and tinge the feeling in the most forgetful mood, and amidst the dullest sensibility. "Looking unto Jesus" is the exercise of every grace, the triumph of every principle, the perfection of every joy. Nor is our message told. "Behold the Lamb of God,"—it is for *your life!* As Noah, hasten to this Ark!—As Lot, flee to this Refuge!—As the serpent-bitten Israelite, gaze on this Remedy!—As the dying thief, turn to this Cross and this Crucified One!—the sinner's Throne of grace!—the sinner's Object of confidence! "So we preach," nor envy we any other theme! Content, happy, most honoured, are we to stand around the altar of Calvary; to invite along the avenues which lead to it, the outcast and undone; and to point

* Isaiah lxv. 1.

them to the one Sacrifice for sin. We are the merest attendants, without a badge of priesthood,—"standing not to offer," but to announce that the offering is consummated! We would be anything or nothing;—but "a voice crying," or the echo of a voice,—a line to this centre, a mirror of this scene, a wand directing human eyes toward this spectacle! So be directed our living energy,—so spent our dying gasp!—Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE.

Romans xi. 6.

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.

There is not a more necessary and consolatory truth than this—reason allows it, revelation affirms it,—"The work of the Lord is *perfect*." Whatever he does, sustains its consistency, and answers its end. Neither is there redundance nor defect. The question of degrees, the scale of dimensions, cannot alter the fact: whether the emmet or the leviathan, whether the atom or the world, each bears a stamp of entireness and self-sufficience. The most cautious inspection, the most fertile imagination, can discover no want, can suggest no improvement. You can relieve no difficulty, you can facilitate no process, you can heighten no result. The system of the individual is as faultless as that of the species, the economy of the particle as that of the universe. The grain imbedded on the shore, the star set among the constellations of the sky, in their differing ranks of constituted nature, exhibit the same matchless adjustment, fitness, and application.

Every "gift that cometh down" from God must be as "good and perfect." It is a boon of pure benignity. "He openeth his hand." "He giveth liberally, and upbraideth

not." "The gifts and calling of God cannot be revoked." His blessings are diffusely scattered, and lavishly bestowed. Through their boundless variety it is impossible to mistake their boundless munificence. "He loadeth us with benefits," but all are true to their character, and worthy of himself.

Counsel, in the sense of *suggestion*,—co-operation, when understood as denoting *aid*,—are words which can never express any acts of the creature towards this Infinite Being. He determines and operates alone. His plan is eternal as his mind, and his single arm puts aside all vaunted assistance when it bares itself to achieve it. This is his absoluteness and his supremacy. Hence those sublime demands which spare neither our ignorance nor imbecility. "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed unto him the way of understanding?" "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Who hath laid the corner-stone thereof?"

If, unaided, Jehovah hung the globe upon its centre, and impressed its course; if all he does present manifestations of glorious independence,—as little will he accept the advice, or seek the help, of his creatures in those purposes and deeds for whose consummation earth was only reared to be the scene, and providence is only impelled to form the machinery. Creation is all divine—Providence is all divine—and Grace must be all divine! We contend for its unmixed essence, its unconstrained exercise, its unrivalled triumph. It must be separated from all impurities, disengaged from all corruptions, and demonstrated to be the spring of divine goodness, to the exclusion of every other motive—and the basis of human hope, to the exclusion of every other support. This "pure religion" must be "undefiled."

The language of the text occurs in the conduct of an argument on the sovereignty of choice and distribution, which belongs to the prerogative of God, and which is involved of necessity in the operations of his grace. Critics have not been agreed on the genuineness of its latter section,—many esteeming it the gloss of some scholiast, and adjudging the amount of authority in its favour to be defective. It is in itself, whatever may be the decision, clearly just and natural, being the converse of that sentence respecting which there can be no dispute. The sentiment of the part and of the whole is strictly one, and easily intelligible. The argument of course is relative. Though the terms are put questionably, not a doubt is implied of the certainty of *that* touching which they are used. *That something* is the doctrine, which avers Christianity to be a system of *free favour* towards the guilty and miserable children of men,—giving all its care to their need, without any admission of their claims, or balancing of their demerits. The inducement is entirely on the part of God,—man from the beginning is merely regarded as *unworthy and incapable of recovering himself.* His destitution of *title* and *recommendation* wants no other proof than the circumstance that he is the *object of grace.*

I. This argumentative assumption or presupposition, must be considered by us.

The present dispensation is only the enlargement and perfection of many: these have been progressively evolved; and all have coincided in their general nature and purport. They have been, indeed, but less or greater disclosures of the same plan, and have therefore been projected on the same principle. The "weakness and unprofitableness" of any were only comparative with that which succeeded, and were suited to the period which the one later and superior would have overborne. Grace is the characteristic which has traversed and assimilated the long extended

series. But the evangelic constitution is its most distinct and professed exhibition. The *word* becomes a specific, as well as prominent, *term* in its language: the *conception* is indispensable for its right *interpretation*. Hence the Gospel is called, "the Gospel of the grace of God." The title in which it arrays the Father is, "the God of all grace." The testimony which it bears to the Son is put in the shape of the well-understood appeal, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Spirit is the "Spirit of grace." This grace is uniformly stated as the cause of the electing purpose,—the reason of our personal justification,—the germ of that renovating process which brings back the moral disposition of the sinner to a standard of holiness and a centre of good,—the potent motive to all piety, as it is the prolific source of all favour. There is no other construction to be placed on the scheme or the operation of the Gospel but what those brief, definite, and most expressive statements of inspired authority so plainly and so repeatedly teach: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us;" "according to his mercy he hath saved us;" "according to his abundant mercy;" "according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." These intimations are as full as language, are as emphatic as repetition, can make them: but who does not feel that there is a struggle for utterance which a finite medium resists, and an eagerness to convey a meaning which a finite intellect, with all its aids and efforts, never can receive?

We may be certain that Christianity is intended for a revelation of the Divine glory. Did Jehovah forego his *claim* to be glorified in all things, did he forbear to *seek* to be glorified in all things, which all must admit to be the *highest possible* end—then he must act in a manner *less* than infinitely wise, *less* than infinitely pure, *less* than infinitely authoritative, *less* than infinitely good. That

which must be the end of all his plans and works, can only be more obvious and explicit in proportion to their value and magnitude. The impress of the design must enlarge and brighten with the grandeur of the achievement. The more important the measure, the more apparent ought to be the resolve to derive honour from it to the Divine character and government. Such explanation, being all but self-evident, will scarcely be contested.

But upon this explanation an additional one must be laid. It may be the Divine will to illustrate a particular form of his character, or what we intend by a single perfection. This is felt by us when little engaged in painful disquisition. The mountain tells us most naturally of the *power* which upraised and figured its lofty head;—the valley, of the *goodness* which clothes it with verdure and fruitfulness;—the firmament, of the *skill* which suspended in those heights its splendid handywork;—the ocean, of the riches of *creative fulness*, which supplies its deep-sunk abysses, and makes it the element of multitudinous life. In this manner there may be a more special revelation of a Divine attribute, the *occasion* more prominently illustrating one than another. Perhaps none would demur to this further explanation.

It may seem perilous, if not presumptuous, to institute comparison between the *varied* aspects of the Divine character, as unfolded in the Christian system, because the tenour of that system appears to be to *secure* the perfect development of *all*. Redemption is the master-purpose of Divine wisdom, the fairest copy of Divine purity, the crowning deed of Divine power, the dreadest infliction of Divine justice, the most costly boon of Divine love. Whatever the light in which it is last surveyed, whatever the purpose for which it is last investigated,—that light is always surpassing, that purpose transcendent. As it revolves, each compartment of the complex wonder is pronounced to be its capital excellence and distinctive glory.

We *now* cannot doubt that it was intended to magnify *wisdom*, and we exclaim, "He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." And *then* we do not question that it was intended to enforce justice, "to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins, to declare, we say, at this time, his righteousness." Once more, we decide it must have been to signalize his power; and instead of seeking a sign, we adore that which eclipses a thousand signs, "Christ the power of God." Again, the faithfulness is so vividly portrayed, that its fulfilment must have been the impulse of all, and we sing, "He hath visited his people to perform the mercy promised to our fathers." This prejudice and infirmity of mind is not a vice inherent in it, but rather a proof of the limitation of its faculties. The "angels" who "desire to look into these things," are not described as acquiring them at a glance, or indeed capable of pursuing them without an effort. And if their piercing eyes cannot penetrate and compass them all at once, a very inferior portion of this magnificence will fill our whole vision, absorb our whole thought, and overwhelm our whole heart. Still every point cannot be most prominent, and every changing opinion cannot be alike conformed to truth. Nor are we left to ourselves to resolve the question. We might naturally make our longest pause, and breathe our fullest ecstasy, upon the mercy, as the predominant feature, and the excelling indication: "For thy goodness' sake, O Lord!" But what saith the Scripture? "That even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "To the praise of the glory of his grace." "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." Such is the deep engraven, the strongly emblazoned, superscription of our religion.

The design of the Gospel once fixed, we possess the best key to its nature, and the truest index to its consti-

tution. That must have its basis in grace which is intended to display and aggrandize grace. Among the different versions and representations of the Gospel, we should be careful to select that which gives to this principle all its descriptive marks and appropriate honours. Let us leave the altar in its native simplicity, knowing that to lift up our tool upon it is to profane it. Let us leave the diadem in its ample outline, without confounding it by any settings of our own.

In endeavouring to disabuse the idea of grace, we must concern ourselves with much that is gross in ignorance, impious in temerity, and wily in sophistry. We must be painfully effected with the coarse effrontery and the perverse ingenuity of those who cannot bend to the ascertained condition of human nature, or to the gratuitous promptitude of divine interposition.

The more ignorant and audacious contention, that human actions can literally challenge and deserve approval and favourable recompense,—that they can, though the agents are utterly depraved, be the subjects of merit, —when thus boldly declared and contumaciously urged, —is generally discarded. Against this more stupid avowal and wanton bravado of error and self-righteousness, we are not often cited to appear. The hostility is more subtle, more evasive; the wolf wears the sheep's clothing; Satan is transformed into an angel of light;—it is not the analysis of the substance, but the detection of the enemy!— But they who oppose the doctrine of the atonement, have been incited to allege an incompatibility between it and the grace for which we plead. With considerable adroitness, they present themselves as champions of the free favour which contemplates sinful man, at the same moment in which they despise the great expedient by which it only can be justly revealed, and consistently sustained.

Hateful hypocrisy! Whence this unwonted part, this sudden zeal? Where is the braggart morality of the

philosopher and worldling now? How is it that the boast of merit and the urgency of claim no longer swell on high? Strange proselytism and marvellous transformation! They are guided only in their blasphemy of their Saviour's name, and their rapine on the Saviour's Gospel, by the fear that grace, in such a connexion, will not be worthily free or adequately spontaneous! How have they been misunderstood! They could not concur with us, because we were not unequivocal as themselves in spreading the honours of infinite grace! They would go further, but we stop short in its full exhibition and fearless averment! They would apply a principle to all its extent, which we gainsay and cramp! True it is, that neither the sound or signification was until now so rife and lavish! But then the emergency that may be served—the success that may be won! Hitherto they kept their mouth with a bridle. The fire was shut up in their bones. The power of repression at length yielded. The holy indignation made a way for its lightning. Who would not make the grace of God a watchword, even if the idea be despised in the heart, if by its prepossessing character and vulgar association a deeper thrust be aimed at Christ's pre-eminence, and a darker slur be cast on the peculiarities of Christ's Gospel! The opposition, by these means, is so consistent and so characteristic! Their jealousy of grace is sensitive to that degree, that they cannot endure the Cross as an adjunct, or Him who hung upon it as its dispenser! Conjectural criticism, materializing scepticism, flippant invective,—the arrogant monopoly of reason, the supercilious contempt of the catholic faith, the treatment of the blood of the covenant as a common thing, and the paring down of our religion to a meagre nullity,—all originate in profound homage and meek submission to the pure and uncompounded grace of God!

It is thus the sophism is enunciated:—Redemption supposes the infliction of the penalty, though it be shifted

from the individual delinquent to his substitute; this is to attribute it to barter and compensation, and not to mercy; to describe it as actually purchased, and not freely bestowed. "For," say our opponents, "that which you call mercy is not free—your Surety has paid the ransom, has cancelled the claim. *Our* archetype of mercy contradicts such notions. It asks no victim, it exacts no term. Therefore the doctrine of grace is our peculiar tenet, for we supplicate as a pure favour what you may sue out as a strict right."

"Our soul is exceedingly filled with this contempt."—The answer to this shallow parade of reasoning is as easy as undeserved. No lion need come out of Lebanon to tread down the thistle. The following observations may not be inapposite or useless.

The atonement is the effect of divine grace and placability.

Its oblation produced no change in the Divine mind. Jehovah is not merciful because Christ has died, but Christ has died because Jehovah was merciful.* The Father sent the Son. It pleased the Lord to bruise him. God is never said to be "reconciled in Christ;" but as in "Christ, reconciling *the world to himself.*"

Christianity, whatever may be its compensative principle, is entirely independent of man in its contrivance and provision.

"The grace which bringeth salvation" is, in no sense, impaired by any arrangements which had a reference to ourselves. Antecedent questions of justice and satisfaction, could not injure the display of that love which was equally in the Father and the Son; which was equally evinced in *inflicting* and *enduring* death. It wears but

* The reader must excuse the recurrence of this thought, simple, essential, as it is, so much does common language overlook or distort it. Even the intercession of Christ is nothing but the perpetual remembrance of the mediatorial process by which God had mercy, and his perpetual consistency with it. He "has respect unto his covenant." "He causes his ear to hear."

one expression towards us,—who, instead of making overtures of peace, still need a creative and a resurgent power to induce us to fall in with them,—who, instead of selecting the Mediator, now only call him the Lord by the Holy Ghost,—who, instead of approving and welcoming the remedy, were scandalized, until another mind was given, by its refusal to us of the smallest share in its honours.

The death of the cross is only a means to the most benevolent end.

We must reason inversely to all general modes of argument, if we can imagine that the grace, which is spread throughout the plan, is weakened, or depreciated, by the existence of certain moral difficulties in the way of its accomplishment. The benefaction is not commonly reduced in its value by its cost, nor a deliverance by its peril. There *must* be a maintenance of right, there must be a resentment of sin: but these preliminaries shall all consist with the pardon of those to whom the violation of that right, and the commission of that sin, have been traced. Is the grace of God the greater, or the less, when encountering no difficulty, or when encountering it to overcome it? Is the grace of God more brightly, or more faintly, glorious, when associated with moral principles, or when disregarding them? It is easy to speak of grace, disjoined from the atonement, as unconstrained; but that which recognizes an atonement, is perfectly, absolutely, so, for it effectuates its purpose by the atonement; and, if *constrained*, is only held to what is right by the immaculateness of its nature, in the same manner in which God cannot err, or lie. Who is affected at the thought of Divine benevolence, when nothing urges, and when nothing opposes, it? Who is not affected when the strait and struggle of human fondness are borrowed to inculcate the infinite effort of that love which surrendered the ineffably endeared "Beloved," who was in its bosom; when we are left amidst the pantings of wonder, the musings of

gratitude, with such an intensitive, transcendental description as this, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all?"

So the Bard represents the Messiah addressing the Eternal Father:

> "Man shall find grace;
> And shall grace not *find means* that finds her way,
> The speediest of thy winged messengers,
> To visit all thy creatures, and to all
> Comes *unprevented, unimplor'd, unsought?*
> *Happy for man, so coming;* he her aid
> Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost;
> Atonement for himself or offering meet,
> Indebted and undone, hath none to bring."

The Gospel, while it upholds the claims of the divine law, has an exclusive bearing upon us as sinners.

Let the awful negotiations between the Father, who is in the Son, and of the Son, who is in the Father,—who are one—be whatever they were,—the sinner has no righteousness or claim. There may be a moral necessity that he shall be saved, but that necessity is perfectly foreign to any thing in himself. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, but it is only through the countenance of mercy he can smile upon our lost condition. We can only be seen, and treated with, upon that level. We can only hope that through the grace of our Lord Jesus, we shall be saved. We can suppose a case in which the loss of a soul should be an injustice to the Saviour's desert, and a robbery of his reward; but that injustice and robbery could not pass through him, and retain the same character toward the soul that was lost. That soul would have justice done to it: its salvation being a question not of justice but of grace.

No blessing of the Gospel is, in any legitimate sense, the subject of purchase.

Such phraseology is, at least, without the sanction of Scripture, if it be not in contradiction to it. Christians

are "the purchased possession;" they are "bought with a price." But the "sure mercies" of the covenant are thus unfitly represented. God was ready to forgive and sanctify, but there was an impediment. This was none other than the inconsistency into which these acts of favour would hurry him, if unattended by a fulfilment of his holy law. The atonement is the removal of that impediment in the prevention of that inconsistency: "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," henceforward, had merely to flow without check or restriction.*

We, therefore, affirm that these conceptions of divine grace are best calculated, and are exclusively adapted, to place it in a true light and on a honourable foundation. We combine all the perfections of the Godhead: we allow for all the moral difficulties of the case: we proceed on admitted and established principles, rather than assumed and arbitrary: we make much stress of the counteracting circumstances which others think did not exist, and of that travail of mercy which others describe as most easy and self-indulgent: we appeal, not to the vagueness of conjecture, but to substantial proofs and monumental facts!

It is plain that a connexion between the grace of God, and the work of Christ, was never suspected to be irreconcilable by the earliest teachers of the Gospel. They bound them together as cause and effect, as design and execution. They contemplated them while they advanced from the germination of the seed to the maturity of the fruit. "Being justified freely by his grace, *through* the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus." "By the *righteousness* of

* It is strange how this vendible language was introduced. The Nonconformist Fathers abound in it. The compositions of Watts employ it very commonly. No preacher, in modern times, used it more than the late pre-eminent Robert Hall. Notwithstanding these high examples, the Author cannot but deem it unwarranted by the letter, and inexpressive of the sense, of Scripture: incorrect in itself, and lending countenance to Socinian objection against our system.

one the *free gift* came upon all men, unto justification of life."

The Gospel being then considered and admitted by us to be a system of grace, the text opposes certain terms to each other, which are essentially extreme and incoherent. We must, then, attempt to prove,

II. That the grace, which is so pre-eminent, cannot be confounded with any inferior or incongruous principle.

We often have to reason on the fixed use of terms. Hence the virtue of definition. This is necessary to all perspicuity and fairness of argument. Endless are the controversies, and as ignoble, when differing amounts of signification are attached to the same pass-word.—You know that some terms have exactly the same meaning. These are familiar to your ear as synonyms. Other terms are called *inconvertible*. They cannot be substituted or interchanged. They are not only, after research, discordant, but on their surface declare a diametrical, a transverse alienation. Such are these conflicting phrases. They are incompatible as any two elements that cannot meet without an overpowering, a neutralization of one or the other: repellent as any two orbs which, having dashed together, could never loose the shock, but must still fly asunder.

Grace is free favour: it can be related to no *right*, and contained in no *law*. It is extra-judicial; whenever bestowed, it depends upon the mere will of him who exercises it, or, upon what is the same thing, his voluntary pledge and agreement. If this latter be withdrawn, there may be a forfeiture of integrity and fidelity,—but it is only so far unjust to those deprived of it, that a claim arose out of it,—but no injustice accrues to them, considered in their *original circumstances*. A simple test of grace is presented by the following inquiries: *ought* it to be exercised? can it be *righteously withheld?* If we affirm

the one, if we deny the other,—it may be obligation, debt, reason,—it cannot be *grace*, for this principle never owes itself to its object; and in not shewing it, the person still is just. If there is any necessity for it, save that of demerit and its misery, it "is no more grace."

Work is individual action or conduct. It comprehends whatever is done in the body,—speech and deed, sentiment and feeling. It embraces the whole range of our moral agency. It implies those particular qualities which provoke praise or condemnation. This course of accountable behaviour is properly—

Personal. We all feel possessed of a something which we cannot transfer. We are the same, notwithstanding changes of time and character, with our former selves. Whatever we have taken part in still attaches to us. We reap what we have sown. We cannot escape the consciousness that we are what we are. It is a solemn thought that our doings, however distant in point of season, and various in point of complexion, are but an accumulation of our responsible being,—the identifying proofs, the mysterious links, of our personal character and history!

Work must be *voluntary* to be accountable. If I am compelled to do what I disapprove, the hand is mine, but that hand is only a mechanical instrument of another's will: the act is not mine, for the inward soul resisted it. It may be, however, that men shall deny their freedom on unreasonable grounds. They may allege the force of their appetites and their affections: but what are these, except so many biases of the will? Motive is not only consistent with liberty, but there could be no liberty without motive. That cannot be an involuntay action, when we act from ourselves, independently of *external* coercion.

Work, therefore, goes to form the *general character* of the moral agent. That which a creature is known by,—his prevailing conduct, from which we infer what it would be under any circumstance, and what it will be at any

period,—conduct, which, while it is more tangible, lays open much of the understanding and the heart,—this we denominate *character*. We all perceive what it intends, however difficult may be its philosophical explication. It depends upon habit, and habit weaves itself out of conduct. A succession of works forms a habit, a variety of habits mould a character. Such has merit or demerit; we attach weight, respect, esteem to it,—or frivolity, contempt, reprobation. Human character, as "God searches and knows" it, is far more; it is the naked attitude of "the hidden man of the heart:" the form of innermost thought, the peculiarity of innermost disposition.

But if this be the just delineation of *work*, it cannot be employed indiscriminately with *grace*. No mixture could be more heterogeneous. They denote things which have nothing common between them.

Grace is opposed to *work* as *it is extrinsic of the person.* It reaches us from another source. It implies an external relation. It is the favour of an independent Being upon us his once revolted creatures. Personal qualities it may inspire,—but its origin is supernal and divine.

Grace is opposed to *work*, as it is *independent of the volition.* Man had no desire to be saved in this manner; and since the day that our first parent hid himself and was afraid, "there is none that seeketh after God." Each heart has yet to be turned, or else "ye will not come unto Christ that ye may have life." And even if man felt the wish, that could not command the grace which is sovereignly free. It is the "kindness of God our Saviour," "who doeth as it pleaseth him." Grace directs our will, which it finds all stubbornness and pride against its influence. "God worketh within us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Grace is opposed to *work*, as it most jealously and

tenaciously challenges that *merit* and *honour* which virtuous and sinless obedience claims, and the divine code awards. "To him that worketh, the reward is reckoned not of grace but of debt." "The man who doeth these things shall live by them." "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory." But the sinner, "saved by grace," disclaims all such "confidence of boasting." Though most active, though "always abounding in the work of the Lord," he is described in the sacred writings as one "that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly." This "work of faith and labour of love" are of another essence. And grace *will* gather the revenues of its honour, and the tributes of its praise. There must be no possible mistake. Each crown of spiritual excellence and of celestial glory must be cast at its feet. "The Lord alone shall be exalted." "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." That the claims of grace may not pass into *momentary* dispute, how does inspired truth throw man back on his nothingness in snatching him from his ruin! One example may suffice: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith.*" Then there is something for self-gratulation! "*And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*" Then that faith is not inert, and works will follow! But these have no part in the matter of justification: "*Not of works, lest any should boast.*" Then works are wrought by us, and so may we plead something self-determining and characteristic! But the last pretence is doomed to fall. "For we are *His workmanship, created* in Christ Jesus unto good works." So perishes the pile of human frowardness and vanity; but by its side rises the sanctuary, whose pattern is in the Eternal Mind, whose altar retains the fragrance of a sacrifice offered once for all, whose foundation was hewn from the Rock of Ages, and whose "headstone was brought forth with shoutings, crying Grace, grace unto it!"

Here then are unalterable, eternal distinctions. Some

numbers can never quadrate, some lines never converge, some substances never mingle,—and these terms can never be transposed,—these alternatives can never be reconciled. Sooner call cold and heat the same, darkness and light the same, death and being the same, than imagine that grace and work can be compromised, or can replace each other. This would be a chaos beyond the poet's dream.

We shall find occasion, notwithstanding their discrepancy and collision, to regret the various attempts made to consubstantiate them; and must proceed to remark,

III. That these are often violently tortured into an unnatural alliance and intermixture among the systems which profess to embody the evangelical dispensation.

Confessions and symbols of doctrinal faith may pass under different names, and may be abetted by different parties. The practised and vigilant eye detects the fraud. The combatants cannot take their aim from the clouds of dust which their onset has raised. Extremes, it is proverbial, sometimes meet: but though this is sufficiently unmeaning, unless it apply to what is simply nominal and not real, still all error, however combined, however varied, however particularized, retains a certain uniformity.

Grace has been "turned into lasciviousness,"—been represented as existing without any holy evidence. Men have "continued in sin that grace may abound." But it is plain that *work* not signifying obedience inspired by grace, but some claim against it,—men will not build up *grace* with *work*, but rather cement *work* with *grace*. This is therefore the coalition, or, if the word may be tolerated, the jumble against which we protest.

That system cannot reconcile itself to the idea of grace, which proceeds upon the *merits* of human conduct. We

do not say that innocence deserves, in the strictest acceptation of the word, the divine favour, but it is a fit subject of reward: for as it must respect a law, it must be dealt with according to that law. But the innocence of a rational creature, (and its application to one irrational, savours more of poetry than theology, and of absurdity than both) is the effect of *inducement.* All law, however seemingly harsh the proposition, is an appeal to self-love. It is *better*, or it is *worse*, as the subject obeys or infringes it,—a law implying sanctions. Such innocence may claim, if not on the right of proportionate merit, yet on the ground of express stipulation, a particular measure of benefit. As God is not "unrighteous in taking vengeance," so he is not "unrighteous to forget" what he has promised to remunerate. All *moral conduct* is of itself rewardable. Still we remember the different circumstances of our race at *present.* They are circumstances of absolute defection and ruin. The resistance of Christianity to all merit is, that such merit is impossible; that its existence is fictitious; that its supposition is monstrous; that its boast is an act of most unreasonable hardihood, and impious contumacy. It militates, not against the doctrine of merit, without which there could not be a moral government,—but against the guilty phantasy that man can secure and retrieve himself in virtue of it. It is an arrest, not upon the principle, but upon his application of it. It does not uproot this Tree of Life, without which innocence would be robbed of Paradise, and Paradise would be emptied of innocence, but only interposes lest he should put forth his hand that is already polluted by another stealth, and whose pollution this additional outrage would but confirm. We, therefore, often hear of the efficacy of repentance; and, if in so many words, the title of virtue is not alleged, the illegality of punishment is loudly denounced. How many who profess to look for salvation to *mercy,* raise an outcry "like an armed man," against their perdition being

agreeable to *justice!* They forget that merit is a relation of justice,—that no creature can ever be treated but according to justice,—that there is an unalterable rule of admeasurement,—that sin has desert, and shall have the wages,—while a lapsed being can only be recovered to a perception and habit of excellence by unmerited goodness, so that all this excellence must be void of claim, constituting but a *part* of that *gratuitous recovery.*

Any *system* which rests *human acceptance* on a *foreknowledge* of some *attractive qualities of character,* cannot reconcile itself to the true notion of grace. It would be difficult to find where this view gains any advantage over the simple undisguised consultation of the creature's claim. It would be as difficult to point out how any supposed embarrassment of these questions can be relieved by such a view. God sees the end from the beginning: there can, therefore, be no real distinction between the *anticipation* of certain virtues and his *retrospective* concession to them. The cause is the same, beheld from different directions; and we but throw farther back that perplexity which, referred to whatever date, is equally irresoluble. But even allowing such anticipation,—fallacious as it is, when intended to explain what it only displaces,—another question arises. Whence originates this foreseen confidence, godly sorrow, and holy love? Foreknowledge is not potential: it is as independent of what it regards, as what it regards is of it. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" "Do men gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles?" Why any creature falls, why any fallen creature does the vilest abominations, are inquiries which are hampered with no dilemma: a creature left to himself by his law of being,—having no claim to be kept, for this sustentation is favour, not justice,—will "go away with a perpetual backsliding:" and there is nothing "earthly, sensual, and devilish," but of which he is capable. No superadded

force is wanted to depress him. But how with his "heart," which is "desperately wicked," does he "believe unto righteousness?" Who has smitten the rock, and melted it into streams of grief? Who has turned the "wilderness into the fruitful field?" If, therefore, it is an anticipation of the sinner's self-cherished excellence, it is evidently not of grace but work, whatever be the question of time; and if it be an anticipation of what God will do in us and for us, his own "good work, which he will begin and will perform," then it is not of work but grace, though regulated by a digested purpose, and not an existing fact,—by what is to be, and not what is.

Any *system* which reckons on the *self-determining power* of the human will, cannot be reconciled to the legitimate purport of *grace*. Whatever a man prefers, he wills, or whatever he wills, he prefers; he inclines, he choses. Here lies the strongest proof of his depravity, that he loves it; and here is the great argument for his moral liberty, that he voluntarily thinks, speaks, and does his sinful pleasure. Is he excusable in breaking the law, because he does not desire to obey it? Or does he, by the prevalence of such desire, cease to be free? "Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abomination." It will be readily granted that all good in the creature originates with the Divine Being. That influence which produces this good, whether light, impulse, grace, or any other term, shall describe it, is either general or partial. All do not benefit from it, but some do. The former fact we could explain,—did we believe it common, which we think negatived by Scripture, and did we believe that God would bestow any thing unavailing. But how is it that some *do* benefit from it? We shall be told that they, unlike the rest, improve it. Then they are only indebted to grace as are all mankind. They are not more so than any of the lost. *They make themselves to differ.* Yet the question returns: How is it

that their will, which is but the bias of their tainted nature, elects the part of good? How is it that it takes grace by the hand, and aids its operation? Should it, in answer, be said, that unless this influence be common, man is unjustly governed, it would follow that a government must provide for the *principle*, as well as the *claim*, of *allegiance* in all its subjects, and that, becoming a business of government, it must leave the station of a favour, to take that of a right. But it is a poor consummation of an energy which is more stupendous than that which creates out of nothing, and quickens whom it will, that it would have converted the creature, if the creature might have been induced to permit it! Such self-determining power, a power to rise above all the known tastes of the soul, would involve, in this connexion, something more determined, more resistless, than the "exceeding greatness of Jehovah's power, according to the work of his mighty power!"

Any *system* which accounts the Gospel as a *provision* of *simple opportunity* and *facility* to man to save himself, cannot be reconciled to a due consideration of grace. This has been called, in somewhat uncouth phrase, a salvable state. It proceeds on many errors, and engenders more. It commonly takes for granted that the Divine law is let down in its requirements and sanctions, as though God had miscalculated and overreached his prerogative in these announcements and safeguards of his will. It generally goes to confirm the sentiment, that a certain line of demeanour will have a pacifying and propitiating effect upon the mind of the Lawgiver, who has already deferred so greatly to his creatures, that he has exposed himself to a necessary implication of previous harshness in exaction and punishment. But where now stands the work of Christ? According to the same hypothesis, it has brought about this state of things: that is, instead of "magnifying the law, and making it honourable," he

has stamped an ambiguity on it, and virtually annulled it; he has died, that man might see that sin was not so evil, and that its consequences ought not to be so dreadful! And after this indignity done the "Holy One and the Just," assigning him the work of "destroying the law," what a mockery of his saving office does it leave him! Man, having been brought into a condition far freer from restraint, and far more exempt from retribution, than before, by the advent of his Saviour, now is able to do what would have been little and useless, until the *milder code* was introduced, but what is very laudable and satisfactory, under the amended form of duty. Still, nature is weak, and passion strong: there may be a deficiency after all. If the tears of repentance cannot wipe out every stain, if the many virtues cannot countervail all the numerous imperfections, then (I tremble to give language to these deformities and horrors of blasphemy!) shall the "blood of the covenant" complete the almost perfect task. Is this grace or work? By this construction of Christianity, Jesus designs nothing more than to put us into a capacity, and furnish us with a chance, of saving ourselves. And by the view we must take of his design, never are we to invoke his righteousness and expiation, but when, after our best and most strenuous self-justifying efforts, we feel that a little more may be required to give our case its last claim and perfect recommendation. Blessed Jesus! thus art thou put to "an open shame!" First thou art made "the minister of sin," in reducing a "law which is holy, just, and good;" and then the friend of presumption, in crowning the labour of those who "go about to establish their own righteousness." This is the estimate of thy stripes!—this is the glory of thy wounds! "A goodly price that thou art prized at!"

Any *system* which vindicates the *pre-requisite* to interest in the Gospel, *as inclusive of all the virtues*, is irreconcilable with a worthy interpretation of *grace*. It need not be

insisted on that *faith* is this pre-requisite; it is the condition (we retain the terminology of our soundest divines,) to "the fellowship of the Gospel." The reason for this constitution is assigned in Scripture most unequivocally; "it is of faith, that it might be of grace." There must, therefore, be an aptitude in this instrument for this end. It must be transparently illustrative of this object. But is not the reason of its constitution often placed on other ground? Is it not often stated that faith seminally contains reliance, love, patience, zeal, and general obedience? Is it not warranted as the guarantee of the best and purest consequences? Is not the stress laid upon its prospective effects? Strip the disguise from this, and faith is vindicated for "its works foreseen." "If it be of work, then is grace no more grace." But all who are in similar error will not feel this application of the argument. These are quite indignant at those simple views of faith which some, who attempt to think for themselves, entertain. Would you take away, they exclaim, all efficacy from faith, as though it could do nothing of itself? Would you resolve it into sheer mental exercise? Would you have us saved by the faith of devils! To this we answer, that no faith can have any more or less qualities in itself; that nothing is so dependent for its character on objective accidents; that it must be influenced solely by the veracity of the witness, and the nature of the testimony; that faith of its own nature has not a saving point beyond brotherly kindness and charity; that the faith of devils is an insupposable case, as there is no "word of the truth of glad tidings" addressed to them; that the process of intellect, by which they believe that there is no provision of mercy in their instance, and by which their rage and despair are awakened, assures us of the reverse; for this is a "faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the *world* to save sinners;" and we have "*joy and peace in believing.*" Faith can neither justify nor purify; it is the

Gospel which only can do the one or the other. It is from the Gospel, faith derives all its influence to "justify without the works of the law," and to "purify the heart." Faith only recognises God as sincere, and the Gospel as true and all-important; and this is its whole use in these great transactions. As men never believed in two ways, or by two mental states, so happy would it be if, when they spoke of our "precious faith," they thought more of the *matter believed*, and analyzed the *manner* less. It is very possible to contend for faith, and to refine upon it, until it become a very righteousness, a more splendid and elaborate "work."

Any *system* which *varies* the *universal freeness* of the Gospel by *moral differences* in man, cannot be reconciled to adequate impressions of *grace*. Without distorting or forcing into one another the things which differ, Christianity surveys all men in their need of salvation, and in their ruin without it. Their guilt of a thousand hues, their depravity of a thousand features, all exhibit them in this predicament of *equal* need and ruin. In its grandeur it seizes on these generalities, knowing that the debtor of fifty pence and the debtor of five hundred are levelled to one condition, and because they have "nothing to pay, it frankly forgives them both." But have we no idea, though we perhaps will not confess it to even ourselves, that some have inferior occasion, and more ready welcome, than others? Could we, with the same unfaltering tone, proffer these blessings for *immediate acceptance* and for *immediate relief* to the ornament and the outcast of society, to the cloistered sage and the condemned felon? Instead of addressing the enquiring sinner, "And now why tarriest thou?" do we not feel more disposed to subject him to trial, and to rack him by suspense? It is difficult to be practically consistent; and there are few, though they are most devoted to the Gospel for its grace, that have not hesitated, in particular circumstances,

whether all should be told, whether a gradual and medicated preparation of its truth should not be substituted, whether a regimen almost irritating should not precede the soothing balm. But no one has discretionary power here. It is his duty to "*testify* the Gospel of the grace of God." And this view flings a burning rebuke upon those who pretend to honour grace by the rejection of all conditions. Yet among the "perverse things which they speak, to draw away disciples after them," these are foremost in erecting conditions which the Gospel never contemplated, and its ministry never acknowledged. They tell us that we must bear no general message, that we should address only certain descriptions of character; that when we find a particular amount of convictions and emotions, there only can we be suffered to disclose the "plenteous redemption." Their idea of grace is, that it must find a congeniality in the sinner; but if magnet there must be, it is of little importance what be its precise attraction, it is only a question as to the *kinds of work*. We preach to the uncalled, to call them; to the unimpressed, to impress them; to the unconvinced, to convince them. Otherwise our commission would be partial and specific, not to "every creature," and to "all people," but determined by human character and discriminative qualification.

Any *system* which founds our *duty* upon a *bestowment* of *grace*, is irreconcilable with its *very principle*. Grace may or may not be exercised, may be withheld, may be withdrawn. But obligation depends upon law, upon expediency, —and when it is moral, its grounds are immovable. Grace therefore can never be a *reason* of duty, nor can duty cease to bind us because of the non-intervention of grace. Yet why is it that many say that *all* men *ought* to *believe?* Their answer is, that *all have grace*. Why is it that many say that the duty is confined to some? Their explanation is, that *only some have grace*. Thus obligation is made to

travel the same course, and to measure itself by the same extent, as that which is under no necessity to exist at all! God's authority is thus suspended upon his mercy, and we should become *unaccountable*, had he forgotten to be *gracious!*—And I beg you will remember two things which are equally true, but by no means contradictory: that gracious influence is necessary to *salvation*, but not to *moral rule*,—is necessary for a sinner in order to be *saved*, but cannot be to a moral agent in order to be *governed*.

You will not fail to observe with what jealousy the sacred writers denounce any encroachment upon the province of grace. As justification is its first expression and act, they set around it a guard of the most solemn cautions. Circumcision was the only rite that the Jewish converts wished to retain; they sought and struggled hard to mingle this with "the righteousness of God by faith." It seemed a harmless peculiarity. But it was a foreign infusion in that element which must be purely integral. It was opening the door to other intrusions. It was a declaration that something might, and must, be added to that on the simple ground of which we are accepted. And how does an apostle regard it? As so irreconcilable with the profession and truth of Christianity, that he who was guilty of it "was a debtor to do the whole law,"—that "*Christ should profit all such as were circumcised nothing*," that "*Christ was become of no effect unto them*," that they "*had fallen from grace*." And as sensitively as we feel the slightest particle in some delicate sense, or a jar through the frame when the quick of some nerve is most gently pressed,—so should we watch against any thing, however minute, and seemingly innocuous, that would detract from the purity, by blending itself with the essence, of grace! Oh how strange is it that men should labour to corrupt this divine principle, to throw strange fire on the altar which burns with the heaven-kindled flame! to adulterate the "feast of fat things!" They extract bitter-

ness from the sweetest flowers in the "garden of the Lord," and distil poison from the "leaves which are for the healing of the nations." They recast the Gospel in their own mould, and mutilate its natural proportions according to their own model. They receive the heavenly to debase it into the earthly. They now complain of the conditions of the Gospel, as too free, and then of its precepts, as too severe; here they allege its salvation to be too easy, and there too arduous,—first, it leaves them nothing, and afterwards too much, to do,—their complaint, that it represents them as utterly helpless, is followed by another, that it expects scarcely any thing short of super-human excellence from them; and thus their wayward objections give a sort of reality to the parable of the children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."—A less theoretic view of this subject remains to be taken. And we proceed to observe,

IV. That these clashing and repugnant principles are equally extreme in their practical effects.

How differently they explain Christianity!

If *work* predominate over *grace*, the Gospel is the republished law. This law is what it was, or it is not. If it is, then why call that the "Gospel of peace," which only tells of war?—why speak of "the hope of the Gospel," when Sinai has not spent a thunder, or allayed a curse? Why rejoice in the republication of a law with greater clearness in those rules which we have violated, and greater terribleness in those penalties which we have incurred? Is this the "ministration of righteousness," in contrast to "the ministration of condemnation?" Is it thus that "the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us, and which was contrary to us, was nailed to the cross?" But if the law, in its new form, be not what it was, then it is extenuated. It becomes what theologues

have called remedial; and it is the consent of God, to accept less than he originally required,—he has lowered his demands on our obedience. But this is not only impossible in Him, "with whom is no variableness," but one or the other of these implications must be just; either that the original claim was exorbitant, or that its abandonment is derogatory. View, then, the state of the question. The Gospel, if the *unabated law*, is a message of despair. All the expectations formed of it were mockery, and all the statements, furnished by itself, are turgid exaggerations. The Gospel, if the *extenuated law*, does not raise "glory to God in the highest," but changes that glory into whatever is short-sighted, fickle, and inconsistent; nor need we exult, for in the prostration of that law, sinks the standard of our good, falls the pattern of our dignity! The "perfect love," with which it dispenses, would have been the perfect happiness of which this act consequently despoils us.—But let grace have the pre-eminence; let the tender mercy of our God visit us! What a change comes over the "great salvation!" What light passes through it! What significance impresses itself on it! It is pardon to the guilty, it is renovation to the depraved, it is relief to the wretched, it is restoration to the undone! It undertakes the whole burden, and condescends as far as we have sunk! It never pauses until it has found out "our low estate," and never relaxes its effort until it has lifted us from it.—What different things the Gospel of *work* so defined, and the Gospel of *grace* so illustrated!

How oppositely they affect the mission of Christ!

That "coming into the world," that "coming in the flesh," that "coming unto the hour" which consecrated Him as a victim for sacrifice, is described as a strenuous labour, as a signal consummation. He "endured the cross, and despised the shame," upon an urgent necessity. This cause must be worthy of such dread expense. He is

always represented as unassisted. He "trod the wine-press alone." "He, his ownself, bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree." Such is the sense of the inspired page respecting it,—his interposition was greatly conceived, and greatly done. And such is the sense, which, "if it be of grace," is fully supported. He "hath perfected, for ever, them who are sanctified." It is not a small uncertain product of benefit which he realizes. "He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "We are complete in him." We honour *grace* in the degree to which we honour the mediation of Christ. "I do not *frustrate* the *grace* of God; for, if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—But "if it be of works," at once the Saviour's mediation is degraded. Though the means are the same, how dwindled is the issue! Though He bled and died, the prodigious cost is redeemed by no corresponding advantage! A subserviency to our convenience is all we concede to him! For what did he "pour out his soul unto death?" According to this unworthy calculation,—to follow in the train of the sinner who strives to save himself, ready to lend his aid, should occasion require it! the armour bearer to the warrior who may not need him, but who is ennobled by his attendance, and secured by his service! The employment of "the true God and eternal life," in such salvation of such sinners, is inglorious beyond all comparison. It is to put the new piece of cloth to the old garment, while the tatters hide and shame it! It is to make up our all but sufficient sum, that we may purchase our own freedom! It is to unloose one hand of the fettered prisoner to enable him to boast, that, with this solitary exception, he unshackled every other limb!

How inversely they influence the human mind!

Grace supposes a certain state of feeling in its recipient. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." That humility is proper in the creature as derived

and dependent,—that it is proper in the creature as fallen from his Maker's likeness and favour,—is beyond the reach of doubt. It is equally indubitable that God, in all his dispensations, aims to repress every opposite disposition. "The proud He knoweth afar off." He will be acknowledged as the giver of all good. Nothing does he more reprobate than even the inclination to "say in the heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." Assumption of independence is the "cursed thing," the root of every evil, the stamp of every crime. This, particularly, applies to religion. There can be no offence equal to that of corrupting or rejecting a religion which only humbles by declaring the truth of our own condition, and by proffering a salvation adapted to the helplessness and demerit of that condition. The God of this religion can suffer no one to "glory in his presence." "Boasting is excluded," necessarily and intentionally. Now, whether of these two principles is the better fitted to inspire that humility of dependence which every relation of the creature, and much more every adjunct of the sinner, dictate? There is all the difference of claim and suppliance: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are!" "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The Gospel repeats, "By *grace* ye are saved;" it adds the reason, "Not of *works*, lest any man should boast."—But the spirit of grace, in contradistinction to *work*, is not only the spirit of *humility*, but of *obedience*. We may conceive of an obedience beneath the scourge of fear, the constraint of interest, the impetus of ambition. These are either passions which are quickly exhausted, or which cannot survive frequent mortifications. The conduct they will urge is not framed for its own sake. They are the chains in which the convict works, or the unpalatable restraints of self-denial necessary to him "who striveth for the mastery." But we can conceive of an obedience prompted by gratitude for some great benefit; we can

conceive of it being congenial to the taste, as well as responsive to the feeling, of the grateful party; we can conceive of that twofold moral influence pressing upon the spirit so equally from without and within it, like the atmosphere upon the bodily frame, that all exists with spontaneousness, and all moves with facility. Whether will comprehensive or contracted views of divine mercy, —whether will the Gospel, flowing from grace, or founded on work,—whether will fear and self-seeking, or sympathy and gratitude,—produce the larger share and purer kind of holiness and worth? The one will be ostentatious, clamorous, arrogant, intermittent, evasive,—the other retiring, meek, lowly, continuous, indefatigable. The former will be "eye-service," the latter of "good-will." "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The incongruity is thus plainly declared in the *effects* which severally follow the admitted ideas of "grace" and "work." They cannot be transmuted in substance, or interchanged in operation. Their mutual adoption is therefore inconsistent, and no juxta-position can give them affinity with each other. They are the rock and sand; they are the gold and clay; they are the day and night. "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

There is a tone of remonstrance in these words, which speaks to all who place their hope elsewhere than on the simple mercy of God in the provision of a Saviour. There are those who would dissociate these ideas. Of God we know nothing but in Christ; and of his mercy nothing but in the cross of Christ. There only justice and clemency meet; there only can the pardoning Creator and the penitent creature approach each other; there only may we in one focal view behold that "God is light," and that "God is love;" that the "righteous Lord loveth righteousness," and that "he delighteth in mercy." These

are the fairest images that ever entered the human mind, —the most stirring of conceptions, the most touching of sensibilities. These are the sentiments we most fondly cherish, and most earnestly recommend. We would "make all men see what is the fellowship of this mystery!" And can you be so "vain in your imagination,"—can your "foolish heart be so darkened," that you refuse the living "waters," for no other reason than that they are given "without money and without price?" If bidden to "do some great thing, would you not have done it?" What is your attempt? If you seek to be justified by the law, avow it, and be consistent. The law will justify perfect obedience, but only that. It has no clause of grace. "Offending in one point, you are guilty of all." "Cursed is every one that *continueth* not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." You may appeal to the judgment-seat; but see that your case be irrefragable in the argument of your sinlessness, or never commit yourself to the headlong extremity. Ah! what strange infatuation predjudices you against the wisdom of this gracious expedient, and blinds you to its necessity? It is too grovelling to accept what God so generously bestows? Will you make your own terms, in contravention of his? Can you only object that he as freely as abundantly pardons? Must you be saved in a manner that shall blot from the act all importance, and leave you without any obligation? Then banish yourselves from the companionship of broken and contrite hearts. Then find a heaven of your own, in which you may pour the full melody of a self-applauding song, and dazzle with the radiant majesty of a self-adjusted crown. "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him *actions are weighed!*"

But let us "cut off occasion from those who seek occasion," though we err by a tautology of statements. The

work to which *grace* is opposed, is some presumed ground of merit; something that wars against the ready, thankful, and earnest compliance of the sinner with the tendered salvation of the Gospel. We "do not sin, that grace may abound," but we honour grace, in "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly." Condemnation cannot coexist with obedience; condemnation is reversed, that obedience may be promoted. Our heart is turned, at the moment that our conscience is purged, from "dead works to serve the living God." We work no longer for the life of safety, but from the life of principle. We know that we cannot be justified by our works, but we know that without works faith is dead. We rejoice that we are "redeemed who were under the law," but do not consider ourselves "without law to God, but under the law to Christ." We believe that "God imputes righteousness without works;" and that the "purpose is not of works, but of him that calleth:" but as cordially do we believe that "this is a faithful saying, and to be affirmed constantly, that they who have believed must be careful to maintain good works." They are depicted as "zealous of them," "ready to do them," "fruitful in them," and when they die, "they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." These are "their necessary uses," and their splendid honours. Be it yours, dear Christians, to emulate them: that while your sentiments give to this blessed grace its purest definition, and your feelings accord to it its warmest praise,—your *lives* may present its most illustrative specimen, most accurate comment, and most beautiful delineation!—Amen.

SERMON VIII.

THE SON OF GOD ANTICIPATING HIS REWARD.

HEBREWS x. 13.

"FROM HENCEFORTH EXPECTING TILL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE HIS FOOTSTOOL."

WHATEVER may be the description of that knowledge which an Omniscient being must possess regarding future events, or whatever is the manner in which future events must shape and unfold themselves to an Infinite mind,—they can simply be considered as future still. Futurity supposes a relation to present time, and only by admitting that relation can we properly conceive the idea which it intends. From analogy, we might therefore infer, as well as from the necessity of the case could demonstrate, that this distinction will enter into the judgments of the Uncreated Intelligence, "the only Wise God." Though "there is no searching of His understanding," He "is a Spirit," He is "the Father of spirits;" and consequently some resemblance must obtain between his knowledge and our own. Such events are not, indeed, contingent because future, futurity being equally susceptible of certain arrangement with the immediate instant. To the Eternal they will stand revealed absolute as his nature, fixed as his decree. To Him there can be nothing problematical, nothing casual; he must foreknow all things, and can only know what is already sure. What has constituted that inevitably sure would form another question, and

belongs to another class of inquiries: but a prescience of future contingencies, of what perhaps may or may not be, is a contradiction in terms. It is vain to say that this perception is merely of their doubtful nature, that they are known as uncertain,—for this confesses an ignorance of the issues, and boasts an information than which no thinking creature can have less. What we contend for is, that the perfection of Divine knowledge does, by no means, subvert or overlook the succession of passing and remote events. For this succession is a *fact.* Instead of things being of one date, they gradually transpire. A child cannot fail to discriminate the order in which one circumstance follow another. Then if nothing of this fact of sequence present itself to the mind of God, there is a something actually existing which he cannot recognize, and which all finite apprehension cannot but observe! His eye detects not what every other eye necessarily seizes! It is not by these verbal perversities, these false reasonings, that we "glorify God as God." The thought of his consciousness must always agree with reality, and the light which inspheres him must be invariably reflected from truth. It is nothing short of absurd to state "that the *future* is *present*" with him. Things are positive and rigid: and though the judgment-day be clearly foreseen and truly determined; though He has appointed the very aspect of its scenery, and the very moment of its consummation, yet it is future to the Judge as it is to ourselves. This being a substantive fact, cannot be more or less true, or vary its truth by any law of relation to higher or inferior natures. *Our* estimate and impression of that future period will most seriously differ from the glance with which Deity meets, and the survey with which he comprehends, it. To us, who are "of yesterday," the distance may seem vast, fancy and computation may sink beneath the attempt to expect it; while in the judgment of Him who "inhabiteth eternity," the postponement

may contract to a span and dwindle to a point,—"a thousand years are as one day!" And this mode of statement He himself warrants. He distinguishes between his intentions and his acts: "declaring the *end from the beginning*, and from the ancient times *the things that are not yet done*, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." Nor can it be any derogation from Him thus to separate the "things which differ." For what is futurity? What is it but that arrangement which He has laid down for the orderly evolution of his own purposes, for the proper succession of events?

These remarks are capable of an application to our present design. When "the Son of God," "the Lord from heaven," interposed to become the "Mediator between God and man," he contemplated certain results arising out of that mediation, and sought, in those results, his recompense of reward. The subjection of all things to himself was the specific end of whatever he taught, performed, and suffered in this strangely-kind capacity; and no indemnity inferior to this could he accept for infinite privations and woes. He demands the accomplishment of this plan, which really is only constituted to give greater effect and wider scope to his benevolence. The triumph he awaits is a triumph of mercy. The victory he will achieve is the overcoming of evil by good. The spectacle he will exhibit is, a world subdued by love. In crushing all adverse principle, all counter-working malice, he is but true to this purpose of benignity, and but cares to establish the well-being of the universe. There is not a world and community of intelligent beings unthreatened and unendangered while any hostile force is left without duly-meted punishment and invincible restraint. To ensure this determination, the oath of Jehovah has gone forth. Because He could swear by no greater, He has sworn by Himself. It rests upon "the immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie." But it is yet

future, it is still reversionary. There is "a set time," and "an expected end,"—"now we see not yet all things put under" Him, who has acquired their right and shall receive their possession! He is "Heir of all things," and is "expecting till all his enemies be made his footstool." This, then, robs him of no glory, and divests him of no claim as "God over all:" for exactly similar representations are employed in cases which leave no doubt with any that the Supreme Divinity is to be understood. Ah, if a hundredth part of the express condescensions avowed by the Divinity had been announced by Jesus Christ,—"in hearkening to hear," "in looking down from heaven to behold," "in leading man to prove him and to know what was in his heart," in "repenting," in "turning,"—how would the enemies of his coequality have numbered and displayed them to deny the perfection of his knowledge, and the consistency of his will! Every explanation is welcome to reconcile the humble language, the deepest accommodation, of the Father: the faintest approach to such gracious mien, the rarest imitation of such voluntary meekness, is always to be quoted against the Divine majesty and prerogative of the Son! The alternative in the former instance is to maintain the condescension of Supreme Power, in the latter to deny Supreme Power from the condescension. "The way of the Lord *is* equal: but as for them, their way is not equal." They make the invidious distinction, turning every statement,—which in the one argument they admit most congruous with all that is Divine,—into a compulsory process, a determinate law, limited to the creature, demonstrative of the man. Little would their utmost objection, indeed, establish; since His person consists of human circumscription and infinite essence!

Let us "seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Him "the heaven has received until the times of restitution of all things." On

him every eye of celestials is turned, to him their every harp is struck. Pierce through every sphere of light, every throng of spirits. Above those sons of the morning, those creatures of beauty and of bliss, how do his glories pre-eminently shine! He is "in the midst of the throne!" He is the centre of all attraction, sympathy, and joy! "The Lamb is the light thereof." But who can explore his bosom and search his heart? Who can divine the thoughts which engage, and pursue the visions which wrap, him? His countenance, his attitude, his station, his office, all bespeak a calm but deep emotion; a hope which beats high but unperturbingly. Some lofty project occupies him, some glorious conception transports him, and we can now pronounce its actual purport. We not only catch, as in a mirror, the expressions of the "visage which was more marred than any man's," and from which hereafter "the earth and the heaven shall flee away;" but we feel the very throb of the heart, which the spear transfixed, while it pulsates with "the expectation" of the ascendancy which the cause—it cherished in life, and clung to in death, and lays hold of forever—is preparing to establish and destined to command. We see not only the array of "the glory and honour" with which Jesus is crowned,—we have access to the secrets of his breast!

Let us consider this Expectation.

In the peculiarity of its scope.

Evil of every kind has forced its entrance into this world. How subtle is its form, how malignant is its influence, how wide-spread is its diffusion! It has drawn to itself that of other natures and spheres. "The enemy came in like a flood." But here is its deepest hold and intrenchment: here too is the theatre of its most notorious publicity and most restless activity. It is more than doubtful whether, in any dwelling-place of the universe, there can be found so many different elements of evil, or such multiform combinations of them. Every where the

leprosy has eat in itself, has fretted the pillars which bear up the earth, and struck through it until it has become like the tainted habitation of old. *We* are "altogether an unclean thing." Having "brought the abomination into our house," we have become "a cursed thing like it." It stamps us with its own image. It transforms us into its own nature. It implicates us in its own doom. There is, consequently, an idea of *hostility* in every scriptural representation of sin. It is the hostility of *rebellion* against God, it is the hostility of *fraud*, *murder*, and *perdition* against man. It does the law and character of the Deity a moral injury; the interests of human welfare it contravenes and betrays.—But this hostility requires, on the part of all loyal creatures, an *opposing feeling*, a disgust of its perfidy and a horror of its cruelty. For as good is the only will of the Creator, "if we be followers of that which is good," we must be "on his side." Since it has no standard but His infinite excellence, love to him implies reprobation of whatever is adverse. That excellence is Holy Beauty, of which benignity is only a part. The emotion which corresponds to it is *holy esteem* and *complacency*, and therefore a contrast necessitates a disrelish and an execration. Hence the Righteous One is represented to be the hater and avenger of evil, because of his fidelity to perfect good in universal purity; and all his creatures who are "followers of him as dear children," participate in the same disposition, and arm for the same war. *He* is only inimical to that which is essentially pernicious, and *they* seek alone the overthrow and extirpation of a destructive principle, which can only exist and operate to the harm of all being and the wreck of all happiness. Malevolence cannot mingle with such a cause, nor enter on such a pursuit. "Judgment shall return to righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it."

The submission of all accountable creatures to God is

not only reasonable, but indispensable to their well-being. Then only can they "walk at liberty." A revolt supposes a blinding and seductive influence which is incompatible with the freest, or which is the same, the most congenial and native exercise of the soul. The balance of the mental and moral powers is deranged. Justice takes its prisoners too. So that in fitness and in law the very good of the creature is abused. Voluntary subjection is his dignity and his happiness. And therefore, when every statute of divine government, and every plan of divine benevolence, insist upon this subjection, it is really but requiring the party who yields to bless himself. Instead of exacting, in this requirement, a harsh and capricious measure, without it God could make no creature happy: it is the indispensable condition of whatever good he can bestow, or we can receive.

Now our text pledges that the enemies of Christ shall "be made his footstool." The preceding remarks will explain the beneficence of this hostile purpose, so far as it supposes the ultimate happiness which it is necessary to produce and secure. But we do not disguise that it involves the eternal misery of certain beings who have so identified themselves with the evil which is the sole object of vengeance, that they must bear all its disgrace, and suffer all its demerit.

At once then we are ready to declare that the inspired account of Divine benevolence is far from supposing the final happiness of all. To rescue one fallen angel it has never interposed: though it redeems from among men "a great number which no man can number," it leaves others to the due reward of their deeds.

We only cite two popular objections. Why, in the first place, it is asked, has not God mercy upon all? But surely an earlier reply is demanded to the question, Why he has mercy upon any? A universal amnesty is not to be forced upon him who need not ever exercise mercy,

though he must always execute justice; and the probability is, that were none "set forth for an example," the ends of moral government would be compromised, and the enormities of sin be forgotten. And a second inquiry is, Why should not these enemies be annihilated, if they cannot be forgiven, rather than be perpetuated in penal existence? Destruction is no law of this created system, no menace of this moral probation; and He who made beings for immortality will not, on account of any change in their character and relation, undo his work and deny himself. It is his will that they live; and this tendency of an endless life is impressed upon them. The question is not what he could accomplish—for a being independent of his power and pleasure there cannot be. It was an unalterable purpose; and this is the reason of their immortality, as it is of their existing *at all.* To recall that immortality would confess the law to be too severe, and its consequences to have been unforeseen. It would impeach its principles and its sanctions. It would be to snatch the culprit from its grasp.—Besides, we should thus recognize a collision of Divine perfections. We distinguish between those more natural and more moral. Power is of the first, justice of the second, class. Let the blow fall which shall extinguish some being. Notwithstanding the reasoning of certain metaphysicians, we hold the effect possible. But would it not be a hideous supposition that *justice* was defeated by *power?* that *force* clashed with *right?* that *arbitrariness* prevailed over *law?*—Taking the Bible with us, we advisedly denounce the vain conceit of universal happiness, and the strange suggestion of spiritual annihilation. From the same authority, we learn that there are enemies who shall be *made his footstool,*—a phrase which cannot denote any thing salutary and propitious to those who are thus prostrated and abased. They are placed beyond the limit of remedy and hope. "He that made them will not have mercy upon them; and he that formed them will show them no favour."

It is somewhat difficult to class the enemies of Christ. The characters of their hostility are recklessness and desperation. However unworthy and despicable, we cannot make light of their aggressions. Their course is most mischievous, though their subversion is sure. They may, perhaps, be enumerated in the two following divisions.

There are particular beings who are his foes. Creatures of his power, endued and sustained by him, are found leagued against him. They "will not have him to reign over them." Their intellect, with all its faculties and passions, strives against his authority and his cause. Fiends and wicked men are alike guilty. We are not disposed to think of Satan less than of a most formidable adversary. "He had the power of death," having introduced it. "The power of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, was," in a very credible and substantive sense, "delivered to him and to whomsoever he would give it." It is not his boast, but an infallible description furnished of him, that he is the "prince and god of this world," He has fortified it as his own monarchy, and converted it into his own temple. He is represented as "a strong man armed, who keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace." His is a gloomy but a royal state. His is an iron-throne and a serpent-crown. His is a train of willing vassals and victims. His dominions lie in undisturbed quiet. Neither is his title questioned, nor his yoke felt to gall. Insurrection there is not among his captive slaves, nor complaint. The "treasures of darkness" he keenly watches and resolutely guards. And when we remember that the "angels excel in strength," that this apostate was probably shorn of none in his fall,—when we further consider the consummate artifice of such close inspection into human nature, and of such accumulated experience of it,—when we still add the intensity of hatred which burns amidst his stupendous powers and gives them their fatal direction,—

it were folly for us to attribute to him little importance, or to think of him with light concern. In him we behold what *sin* is, and what is its desert: the lofty proportions and vast capabilities of his nature are informed and dilated by it, and its sentence is branded on his thunder-scarred brow. It is the fearful consequence of joining in his rebellion, of making this "agreement with hell," that human beings become "enemies to God by wicked works;" that they are dealt with as confederates; and that if finally incorrigible and implacable, if at length they do not "recover themselves out of the snare," they must "depart into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." It is only meet that this common revolt be counteracted with the same spirit of determined opposition as that in which it is waged; that when creatures "rebel and vex his Holy Spirit," He should be "turned to be their enemy, and to fight against them." The divine character, the universal interest, each idea of government, each ground of law, demand the suppression of this treason, and overthrow of those who have conspired together in it.

To these *beings*, the Scripture subjoins certain hostile *principles*, which under the veil of allegorical allusion, and by the aid of bold personification, are denominated *foes*. *Sin*, as a criminal, is "condemned in the flesh." The *world*, as an adversary, is "overcome." *Superstition* is Antichrist, that wicked one, the man of sin. *Idolatry* is a Dragon, having "a power, a seat, and great authority." *Persecution* is a "woman drunken with the blood of the saints." *War* "sits on the red horse, and there is given unto him a great sword." *Religious imposture* is "the false prophet." *Death* is the "last enemy;" the *Grave* is taunted with its "victory;" *Hades* is defied with "its gates," "follows with death," and "is cast along with it into the lake of fire." All these evils will find a subversion. They are among "the enemies who shall become this footstool." Signal displeasure shall be manifested against

them. As opposed to whatever was comely and beautiful, just and kind, they shall be denounced and destroyed. But it is plain that all their hostility drew its dint from *living intelligence*, from *accountable nature*,—and the punishment must therefore fall on that which is sentient and susceptible. To *beings* shall their odiousness be exposed, and on *beings* their resentment must be visited. The subjection of these inimical forces is the grand design of the Saviour's advent into our earth. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might *destroy the works of the devil.*" "He hath *put away sin.*" "He gave himself for our sins, that he might *deliver* us from *this present evil world.*" The *various forms of depravity* which exist in the passions of men, and which have even corrupted the *character*, while they pleaded the *sanction*, of his *religion*,—he will, at his second appearing, "consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming." "He will swallow up *death* in victory."

The tendencies of Christianity co-operate with this design. They are precisely adapted to "put enmity between the seed of the serpent and of the woman." They set us in the strictest resistance to all evil as an usurpation. We know that the Gospel conjures us to be "reconciled unto God;" that it is a system of allegiance and love; that it is the appointed means of excluding from our earth, and eradicating from our nature, all that is detrimental and untoward. It does not palliate the evil, but resolves to dry its source and kill its root. The "Author and Finisher of our faith," is therefore described in the gradual process and ultimate triumph of his truth, as separating all alloy and disengaging all worthlessness—"sitting as the refiner," "having his fan in his hand that he may thoroughly purge his floor." And when he reduces his enemies to the condition of his "footstool," it will be the righteous vindication—dread as is the act—of his benevolence,

which all these hostile natures existed to thwart, and all these hostile principles operated to embarrass.

Now these perverse abettors, and monstrous forms, of guilty variance with the Saviour, he awaits, on his throne, to see entirely subjugated. These enemies must be overthrown. Their purposes shall be baffled; their energies shall be subdued. In vain shall they writhe beneath the feet then planted upon them! They shall bite the earth and lick the dust! From their promised greatness, from their towering ambition, they shall be hurled to the ground, and become the footstool of Him who was "despised and rejected" of them!—This figure supposes

Defeat. Long since was the basis of his victory laid, its title established. He, upon the cross, "made an end of sin," and "destroyed death." Then was "the judgment of this world," then "was the prince of this world cast out." He encountered their united shock and prevailed. No future struggle can resemble the past. He has won, and only has to apply, the victory. "The Lamb shall overcome." He who conquered when "crucified in weakness," can be disconcerted by no force, and impeded by no difficulty. Even now his most inveterate enemies gasp beneath their death-wound. But the vengeance is yet to be wreaked. The triumph is yet to be displayed. At present the spoil is not sufficiently gathered, nor the host refreshed. Still these enemies find no hope in the future. They have not even the desperate hazard before them of another combat. Their destiny is cast. Their struggles, however oft repeated, and however long extended, are in chains. They cannot meet again their Awful Antagonist; no more can they recoil before him. He has "bound the strong man." The deed is done. The weapons of their war have perished. Soon shall "the army of the aliens" be brought forth. Our Jesus has imprisoned them in their refuge. And as the Israelitish chief dragged the kings from the cave of Makkedah, and summoned his warriors

to "put their feet upon the necks of those kings,"—so, having "bruised" our enemies "under our feet," the "Captain of our salvation" shall "tread them in his anger and trample them in his fury," while he calls upon an applauding universe to confess his fame and sing his victory! "There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise!"—Nor does the image which implies *defeat*, less import

Degradation. Evil is highly flattered and powerfully supported in the present state of things. It throws an intrepidity and daring around it. Much exists to encourage it. "Hand joins in hand." It enthrones itself upon "high places." "The multitude" does it. It finds countenance in the communities, institutions, and laws of men. It calls every association of a proud honour to its aid. There is every effort, every contrivance, to evade the sense of shame. But then a new, though the just, feeling shall seize upon the enemies of the common good. Reproach shall cover them. Inly shall they shrink. Low shall they crouch. Their deformity will be unveiled. Their purpose shall be detected. All eyes must shun, all hearts detest, them. Nothing can survive to cheer their spirits, to rally their resources, or to redeem their excesses. And now awaking "to everlasting contempt,"—the very "footstool" of Him whom they were too haughty to acknowledge, and too stubborn to serve,—they suffer the doom threatened by the Eternal Sire against the enemies of the Son: "I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him." "All that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."—And this similitude denotes also

Subserviency. Now does the Saviour "rule in the midst of his enemies." He can "put in their hearts to fulfil his will." He allows not of their independence, whatever may be their boast. Their "wrath praises him." They "are made for the day of evil." He "knows their abode,

and their going out, and their coming in, and their rage against him." They have their use in his plan: they are the slaves, and not even the mercenaries, who hew wood and draw water for the erection and service of his temple. And in that day of anticipated triumph, they who "took counsel together to break his bands asunder," shall be shown, through all their unwitting course, to have ministered to him: and then shall become instrumental to his state. They shall be thrust into a very "footstool" for him. From them, not only harmless but accessary to his royal dignity, he shall exact a final service. They shall swell his pomp and express his grandeur! While they gnash beneath him, not only shall their overthrow teach their powerlessness to mate with his strength, but prove that their hostility to his perfect benevolence gave the darkest hue to their guilt, and constituted the most exasperating provocation of their punishment! Thus "the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he *reserveth* wrath for his enemies." "He will *wound* their *head;*" "he will *clothe* them with shame;" he "will *see* his *desire* upon them." And though this requires a terrible retribution, it is necessary that mischief and misery may cease, and that "destructions may come to a perpetual end." And when He "treads down" them "who stumbled and fell," it is no tyrannic sway, no cruel parade: it is Benevolence sitting in its State, it is Sceptred mercy and Enthroned love!

Having pursued the scope of that Expectation which is cherished by the Saviour, let us consider it

IN THE PERIOD OF ITS COMMENCEMENT.

It takes its rise with a certain date, it follows in a particular order. "From henceforth,"—that is, upon some *scene* being past, some *epoch* having expired.

—A scene how strange! It commenced with a manger, and ended with a cross. It was constituted of misery, and consummated by death. It was an eclipse of Infinite

Majesty. It was the travail of Eternal Might. He stooped from heaven to the "lowest parts of the earth." He sunk from the regions of immortality into the grave. Constantly that scene evolved with new ignominy and enlarged woe. But it is fled, never to be repeated!

—An epoch how tremendous! It was the crisis for which all time was born, and upon which all history was balanced. The interval it included measured such moments and years as never rolled before or since. To this fulness of times all had culminated, and by it all are impressed. With the suspense of that crisis the universe vibrated. But it is numbered, never to be recalled!

Still the original term may yield a more *extended meaning:* that "which is left," or "what remains," "the rest is that He should expect till his enemies be made his footstool." Hitherto something preliminary and necessary had always intervened. The *expectation* depended on some condition, and looked through some medium. It is now unbroken and unmixed. It is a free and commanding vision. Nothing confuses and embitters it. It rises serenely, it advances steadily, it opens unallayed; no more to be secured, but simply meditated and uninterruptedly enjoyed.—What, then, was the restriction until now? What was that requirement which stood up before his mind, and darkened this glorious prospect?

He must endure the most inconceivable sufferings.

From eternity they had risen on his view. When he rejoiced, by benevolent anticipation, in "the habitable part of the earth," he contemplated it as a stage for their endurance. Gethsemane was there as well as Eden; the river, which watered the garden in which the first Adam was placed, did not ravish him more with its sweet music than Kedron then murmured mournfully on the ear of the second Adam, as if ready to drink his tears; and the original tree which was "made to grow out of the ground," contained the germ of the Cross. He beheld, when bidding

the Deluge to subside, the hill Calvary, more prominent to his eye than the peak of Ararat, emerging from its bosom. He foresaw, when he rained fire upon Sodom, "the great city, which is spiritually called by that name, where he was crucified." His death was perpetually imaged in bleeding mysteries, and announced by prophetic oracles. Had he been able or disposed to forget it, the reiteration of its signs was too frequent, and the assertion of its horrors too distinct. "The harp, with a solemn sound," was struck by many an inspired bard to strains still more intense and articulate, as the time drew nigh when he should "tabernacle with us." During that sojourn, these omens thickened upon him in ever-accumulating succession. There was neither respite nor pause. Each association of external objects took this character; all his thoughts and his allusions declared this presentiment. He computed time by this index. "My hour is not yet come!" "The hour is at hand!" "The hour is come!" "Save me from this hour!" When was the minute, where was the point, in which the presages of his agony and crucifixion did not lour before him? The path of the Victim, the procession of the Sacrifice, reached back to his "goings forth which were from of old, from everlasting," —"It is finished!" He shall not suffer another pang, nor the thought of another. "He dieth no more." No intimation, no suggestion, of woe can pass his mind. No complaint, no deprecation, of pain can escape his tongue. He has thrown all that which was once the gloomy and bitter future into the past. It lies in the "dark backward and abysm of time." Before him stretches the unclouded scene of peace and joy. He expatiates in it without check or possible dejection. There grows not in it a thorn, there rests not on it a shadow. He looks out from his throne, and, conscious that his sufferings have entirely and eternally ceased, merely awaits "till his enemies be made his footstool."

Ere this *expectation* could be unreservedly indulged,
He must lay the basis of his mediatorial offices.

Being sent to save mankind, rejoicing in the purpose, he had to surmount certain moral exigencies. These respected divine claim and human incapacity. Without sacrifice God could not allow, without sanctification man would not accept, "the gospel of salvation." For both these ends, it cannot be too often repeated, provision must be made. There must be a counterbalancing desert to man's demerit, and a counteracting influence to man's indisposition. Christ has undertaken for us. He must, therefore, substitute an equivalent righteousness, and exercise an efficient energy. We must be pardoned for "Christ's sake," we must be renewed by the "Spirit of Christ." The whole is a *special work* which He was to accomplish, and from it arises a *special title,* which he applies. "He is able to save to the uttermost:" but this *ability* is as much a right, as a competency, to execute the deed. He has "obeyed the law," he has borne our sin and curse. We are saved, not in deference to his pre-eminent virtue and exalted dignity, as children have "found grace" because of their parents,—but we are saved in regard to a series of positive acts performed, a succession of positive sufferings endured, for the *express design of saving us.* Upon these the Mediatorial relations and characters of our Lord depend. Only by this course does he become a prophet, priest, and king. And this "work which the Father gave him to do," had hitherto obstructed the spectacle of this final subjugation. While it remained, it filled the sphere of thought and attention.—"It is finished!" His oblation can never require another grain of incense to enrich its "sweet-smelling savour," nor can his endless intercession find another plea beside his "obedience to the death of the cross." And it is now for him, without this pre-engagement distracting and intercepting the view, to cherish the future, amidst which stands no

difficulty and arises no labour—a scene of sweet refreshment and calm repose. He aspired to these offices that he might control all things by the power, and for the triumph, of his love. His blood was our ransom from the demands of justice, and his power is employed to "save us from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us." And having so "fulfilled all righteousness," the diadem is set upon his head, and heaven is his throne, that this prospective reward may stand forth to him with a definite outline and living truth. He need deserve no more to win it; and whatever of particular commission was necessary to obtain his title he has executed. His eyes, "like unto a flame of fire," gaze upon the vision of his final glory, dispreading in its amplest folds, and irradiated with its strongest splendours. "For He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from *his own works*, as God did from his."

Previously to the unrestrained enjoyment of this catastrophe to the universal plan, the Son of God

Must overcome his spiritual adversaries.

Fallen angels had "taken us captive." Our circumstances, in the first instance of probation, and in all others of depravity, gave a facility to their malign purpose. But we do not think that Scripture ever affixes to this power obtained over us any idea of *right*. It is a violence, a rapine, but not a lawfully founded rule. And therefore, to the best of our judgment, the Scripture does not express our deliverance under any notion of *equitable redemption*. It is not to be indemnified, but overthrown. Satan set up his "power of darkness," but "greater is He that is" for "us, than he that is in the world." It was power which should assail, and not price which might remunerate. "A stronger than he must overcome him, and take from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils." But it is a necessary inquiry, how created strength can, for a moment, hold combat with

omnipotence? We traverse not now the realms of poetry, but of far more magnificent truth. Let it be remembered, according to some of our earlier statements, that it was not in the mind of the "Great God our Saviour" to annihilate the existence, or suspend the agency, of any accountable creatures: and therefore they opposed him with their derived power, but their spontaneous malice. They were "left at large to their own dark designs."* But it contradicts all reason, that this strife should have partaken of a physical character; that mountains torn from their roots, and linked thunderbolts, should have been the weapons. Such an encounter "makes arms ridiculous, useless the forgery of brazen shield and spear."* "He that sitteth in the heavens would laugh, the Lord would have them in derision." It is not, then, a trial, a shock, of strength whose issue must be easy and immediate: it is a struggle in connection *with particular moral means*, and *certain moral principles*. Did this tyranny arise out of our *sins?* In their counteraction the tyranny is quelled. Did wicked *maxims* and *practices* uphold the tyranny? Its falsehood yields to truth, its treason to fealty, its mischief to good. Did this tyranny *enslave* the human race? It crumbles before that salvation which "makes us free indeed." Did this tyranny erect on earth a *rival* influence? It is broken to pieces by the kingdom which the Redeemer raises in the human heart, the kingdom which destroys all hostility and has no end. Did this tyranny indirectly, though consequentially, form a part of the *penalty* which guilt incurs? It is dissolved wherever that penalty receives a remission. Did this tyranny consolidate itself in the "*ignorance and blindness*" of our nature? It is stricken to its centre by every exposure of its machinations and delusions. Now all this is the history of the event. Jesus must have the *official qualification* of the Mediator, in order to wrest his people

* Milton.

from this infernal seizure. Thus only did he equip himself and become "mighty in battle." Justice, until then, could not suffer the liberation. But when He *died* to expiate *sin*, to establish *righteousness*, to secure a glorious *liberty*, to "receive for himself a *kingdom*," to repeal "all *condemnation*," to "wound the head out of the house of the wicked, by *discovering* the foundation unto the neck," —he effectually closed with his enemies, met them in the plain, and secured their irretrievable discomfiture. *Thus* he substantiated his supremacy, and disarrayed the traitor-host. And their fall is so much the more abject, as it was not wrought by simple power, by an appeal to force, but by confirming great and important principles, which are irreconcileable with every rebellious attempt, and subversive of every rebellious system.

We have, in the Evangelic record, an account of the Messiah's death: but nothing seems more remote from every circumstance of victory. No such enemies as these appear, nor is there a demonstration of their attack. Hasten to the scene. *There is an engine of torture!* And is this to be the standard of the war? *There is a place of execution!* And is this fit theatre for the enterprise? *There is a cry of despair!* And is this the voice of one who shouteth for mastery, and who findeth a spoil? As if in mockery of that weakness and woe, we are informed by an inspired commentator, that "He blotted out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them, openly triumphing over them *in it*." Was ever history and description more at variance? "He nailed the hand writing to his cross!" The superscription of his offence is there, and the hammer has driven nails through his hands and feet to suspend him on it. "He spoiled!" Instead of stripping others, the "soldiers part his raiment among them, and upon his

vesture cast lots." "Principalities and powers!" All rank and authority are leagued against him, and have succeeded in destroying him. "Made a show of them openly!" He is transfixed, naked, insulted, pierced, a spectacle to heaven and earth. "Triumphing over them!" His murderers gloat over him as *their* victim, while they deridingly shake their heads, and barbarously "sit down to watch him there." "In it!" The cross is no vantage-point from which to deal the blow that shall scatter the enemy as chaff. Yet this is the infallible construction upon the death of Calvary, and therefore "the mount" must have been "full of horses and chariots of fire." To Him, who there "set up his ensign," stood revealed the presence and the agency of spirits that desired this death, and had complotted with man to secure it. For "Satan entered into the heart of Judas,"—and the crucifixion was the masterpiece of his stratagem, and the burst of his rage. He deemed that it must be a downfall to the cause of Him who had come to "bruise his head." And oh, what furious joy he felt when the traitor kissed Him: when the multitude demanded his death: when the governor outraged every sense of justice in his condemnation: when he was hurried away to the place of skulls: when he was uplifted on the tree: when the spear was thrust into his heart: when he bowed his head: when he was laid in the grave.—The blow in which was collected the vengeance, and in which fell the aim, of four thousand years, at that moment struck him down! "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer!" Dread was then thy distraction! Ghastly then was thy despair! Caught in thine own toils! Crushed by the recoil of thine own engines! Then learnedst thou what is hell! Thy chain had never lacerated until it received this rivet; thy fire had never consumed until it was reddened by this blast! Then thy captivity was taken captive! Then thy counsel was turned into foolishness! Then thou didst betray thyself! Then

thou wast cast down!—The conflict was real in proportion as it was moral! Human sense could not apprehend it. There was no blazonry of arms. There was no "shouting at noontide." But in a field impalpable to our eye, and with a din impalpable to our ear, the adversaries confronted and strove. And a concussion of powers must then, by other beings, have been as distinctly felt as when this earth, in mysterious sympathy, rocked with surprise and quaked with fear; an array must have been observed by them, more dazzling than had the stars in their courses fought against each other; or had the rout fallen, like lightning, from heaven.—"It is finished." Our Champion overcame. Nothing was wanted to secure the conquest. He looked around the battle-scene, but all was complete. Henceforth he resigns himself to the "vision which is for an appointed time, and though it tarry, waits for it." He will contend no more. No other enemy can arise. Victory has sheathed his sword for ever. And it only remains that he dictate his terms, that he apply his successes, that he distribute of his spoils, that he dispose of his captives, that he recline beneath his palms!

What then *now* intervenes requires no such suffering, labour, and conflict. Not that we make light of those mediatorial functions which he still executes, nor that we can imagine his state of reward supposes any notions of inactivity. He lives for the most important ends. He intercedes. He reigns. "We are saved by his life." He is "our life." "Because he lives, we shall live also." "He abideth a priest continually." "His throne is forever and ever." In both these offices "he is consecrated for ever more." But then he only pleads and presents the merit of his blood, and only sways and enforces the "all power, given to him, in heaven and in earth." No idea of difficulty, no circumstance of trial, remains. "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." "He is Lord of

all." Whatever are his enemies, he "despises their image." And though we must conceive of his constant agency, it is marked with the utmost possible facility, it is "the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." All moves on in an unbroken train. The progression sweeps majestically forward, embodying the scenes of prophecy, and ushering in the ages of peace. "He hastens it in his time." He rests from pain, from toil, from strife,—not with indolent repose, but refreshing activity,—"*His rest is glorious.*" "*He fainteth not, neither is weary.*"

This Expectation must be considered

In the Temper of its indulgence.

During the life of our Lord on earth, a desire of the reward which depended on his death is very perceptible. As it was promised to him, "because his soul was made an offering for sin," that "the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand;" so he ever and anon anticipates this glorious sequel to his labour and woe. It cannot be too constantly remembered, too vividly impressed, that the result is one of the divinest charity,—that it is the *largest possible amount* of the *purest possible happiness* for the *greatest possible number* of *moral beings.* Therefore, each incident, though apparently slight, offers occasion of triumph and warrant of hope. When the inhabitants of Sychar came forth to examine the truth of the report which had been conveyed to them of the stranger sitting on Jacob's well,—He said to his disciples "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Having observed the "great faith of the centurion," he exclaimed, as though this was the specimen and earnest of a believing world, "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven." Certain Greeks would see him, and when their curiosity was testified to him, he was elated with a holy transport, "The hour is come, that

the Son of man should be glorified." When Mary poured the spikenard over his head, he declared with an emphatic assurance of the future: "Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." These scenes, these triumphs, attracted his loving heart; and constituted that "joy set before him" on account of which he "endured the cross and despised the shame." And now he has "for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth *expecting* till his enemies be made his footstool."

It is a somewhat unusual term, and in this connection inspires high and animating thoughts, involves strong and solemn pledges, which embolden and "assure our hearts." Nor is it possible to conceive of this Expectation without supposing a *concentration of mind upon the destined result.* All things in their appointed dates and stages are exposed to his knowledge. The plan of the universal future is spread out under his eye. "Hell is open before him, and destruction hath no covering." What changes of dynasty, what revolutions of empire, what causes of vicissitude, are laid bare to his glance! No moment, no event, can he overlook. The number of our hairs he cannot mistake, nor the fall of the sparrow can he neglect. "He is the First and the Last." But this final object engrosses him. All his thoughts linger here. It absorbs his dearest will. He pierces whatever is intermediate to rest his attention upon its scene, and to expatiate amidst its glory. Occurrences derive all their value and interest to his eye from their relation to the issue which he now undivertedly regards, and according as they are accessary to "his glorious appearing," when he shall triumph over all the powers of darkness and the occasions of woe.

Circumstances might sometimes tempt us to distrust the *earnestness* of this Expectation. Obstacles are suffered, delays are brooked, which *we* determine could be pre-

vented, or, if they must arise, could be instantaneously repressed. This is but the re-appearance of our common error—the supposition that power, in the sense of force, should control moral agency and expedite moral government. His rule is directed, in consistency with the probation of man, to stem the torrent, to draw it off into other channels, to render its proudest waves demonstrative of the strength, and subservient to the speed, of the Ark which rides over them. But never can his anticipation grow indifferent and languid. The most fervent ardour of the saint, the collective zeal of the church, is coldness itself when compared with the strength of his desire. Never has it wavered, never can it decline. He is as resolved upon it as when he descended to earth and arose to heaven, that he might appropriate the right and adjust the attainment!

And this Expectation is formed in a manner *most worthy of the mind which cherishes it.* It is a perfect prescience. Hope lends the reality no exaggeration, fancy decks it in no fiction, but it rises before the Saviour in the very shape of truth and fact. It shines upon him, though from afar, with a steady light and perfect delineation. We cannot "look steadfastly to the end." The vista dimly twinkles before our eye through means vast and complicated. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." We confound and often loose the glimmering. He predestines and seizes it. The vision approaches or retires at his bidding. His comprehensive survey embraces only that which it contains. It is not now brighter and then more faint; it owes nothing to a varying gleam; it stands out distinctly beneath the sun of its own noon, and to the all-searching scrutiny of that foreknowledge with which there is nothing dark and precarious!

The *serenity* which distinguishes this Expectation blends most beautifully with its dignity. The passions of man cannot adequately represent the emotions of His

bosom. Nothing is more disquieting to our feelings than hope deferred. We are ruffled with the excitement of any prospective gratification. Agitation marks the excess of our joy, and our feeble power of entertaining it. But He "who has sat down expecting till all his enemies be made his footstool," dwells in the purest calm. He diffuses around him an infinite repose. No anxiety sits upon his brow. No doubt depresses his heart. The light which informs him of the future is soft as it is piercing. He has nothing to learn, nothing to resolve. In the settlement of his plan and the certainty of his reward he lives assured, he exults meekly. His "very rapture is tranquility."* Many events perpetually occur which seem untoward and perplexing. They spread consternation upon earth. "The kingdoms are moved." "Men's hearts fail them with fear." The pious are "filled with the cup of astonishment." "Truth has fallen in the street." "The spirit of heaviness" has palsied the energies and anticipations of the church. But these things have never reached his atmosphere, nor disturbed his peace. They have thrown no obscurity over his prospect, and have struck no chill through his breast. He has beheld the temple arise, "growing" like a stately tree with all the certainty and quiet of a vegetation; and the "troubled times in which it was built" have not grieved his eye, nor have "the axe and the hammer," employed in its erection, wounded his ear. His eternal conception presses forward to its realization without effort and misgiving; and his unvarying expectation, itself an element of calm, leans placidly, and rests untremblingly, upon the ultimate consummation. The scenery of prophecy thickens in interest and rapidity as it hastens to its close; and in passing characters and events a reality is given to its awful action. We cannot but perceive that there is a "shaking of the heavens and the earth." All things seem

* Young.

to feel the eve of a solemn crisis. Signals are streaming, alarms are ringing, on every wind! The oldest relations are cut asunder, the most massive foundations are dissolved. A restlessness of innovation, and an impatience of restraint, hold contest with a pertinacity of power and a dotage of prescription. Billow chafes with billow. The maddest theories are propagated, the wisest expedients are spurned. Anarchy is demanded, liberty is denied. Kings, as if they saw the mystic fingers which write their doom, start from their thrones: the tumult of the people, like the noise of the sea, declares that the mounds of authority are giving way before it. The storm will have its drift! The earthquake will force its vent! The flood will rend open its channel! But the Divine Expectant observes and disposes all. His glorious seat vibrates not to the shock, his tranquil mind is not embarrassed by the turmoil. The seals may be broken, the trumpets be sounded, the vials be discharged; there may be "lightnings, and voices, and thunders;" yet He stands with undiscomposed mien, and with majestic serenity—the *Lamb upon Mount Sion,* "meek and gentle," "giving rest to all the weary who come unto him," and existing "in quietness and assurance for ever."

The *confidence* of His mind is the secret of that sweetly calm decision which distinguishes this Expectation. Time was when despondency saddened it. Not only did his approaching sufferings dismay him, but he deplored the absence of success. His language took the cast of complaint. "Who hath believed our report?" "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." But, since he "ascended on high," whatever events have transpired, they could not thwart his design or deject his spirit. Nothing has hung in suspense. Nothing has been the cause of vexation. When every eye has been strained to observe "the things coming on the earth," when there have been "great searchings of

heart," his tone never faltered, his courage never misgave. Still he has said, "I know that I shall not be ashamed." He sees the goal. The shadow of his hand falls upon the spoil. He has "the substance of things hoped for" in his infinite knowledge and decretive will. "He shall send forth judgment unto victory. He shall not *fail* nor be *discouraged* till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." He beholds from above, with a sureness and exactitude which no mortal ideas and instances of certainty can convey, the ready obedience of some, the involuntary surrender of others, the eternal subjection of all. The conversion of "his enemies into his footstool" is the sign that "they, who have overcome," are "sitting on his throne, even as He overcame and is seated with his Father on his throne."

This Expectation draws with it an *infinite complacency.* He who "hateth nothing that he hath made,"* seeks the greatest measure of good. He, in this special act of punishment, pursues the plan which shall secure good the most enlarged and pure. He is swayed by no jealousy of authority, by no eagerness of revenge. Our wishes often give rise to our hopes, our hopes to our expectations. That order of feelings, which we dominate *personal,* has a blinding influence, and we are sometimes aware of their contrariety to our duty, as well as the general interest. But in "Jesus Christ the Righteous," whatever is kindly and beneficent, is wise, and holy, and equitable; an eternal reason directs it; an infinite excellence impresses it; an almighty power enforces it; it is His prosecution of created happiness by the only legitimate means, and according to the only admissible principles. Well, then, may He rejoice that his enemies shall become his footstool. So long as they have any license of power, they have a capacity of mischief. Confusion and misery are their delight. To defeat the end of all moral being is their settled purpose.

* Ash-Wednesday Collect of the English Church.

They wield but instruments of destruction. They revel in ruin. They exult in every species of falsehood, misrule, and wrong. And when he is rapt into this vision, he cannot fail to "desire it with desire." Then shall he tread out the last train of disorder, stifle the last atom of evil, extinguish the last coal of strife, disable the last weapon of cruelty, and purge the universe of those hostile elements which have so long jarred and shattered it. Then He redeems the pledge of his nativity, then He has fulfilled the purport of his mission, then He has realized the fruit of his death, and the songs of angels rise to celebrate the consummation of the plan whose earliest dawn they hailed; and no fuller strain do they need for the close than they swelled over the commencement, "*Glory* to God in the highest, and on earth *peace, goodwill* toward men!"

The *influence* of this Expectation must be powerful. It cannot be cherished without attracting to it the sympathies of the intelligent and moral creation. It draws every thing after it. The universe rolls in its direction. It gives the law and bias to whatever exists. As "all things were created by Jesus Christ, so were they *for him*." He has constituted the vast machine, he still impels each spring and controls each movement, while the grand result is educed from that real, though unapparent, unity which combines all its parts, and harmonizes all its operations. And it is a solemn thought, that a dread anxiety pervades all the evil and the good. Demons "know their time is short," and would not be "tormented before the time!" They turn their malignant eye to Him who is "henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool;" they shrink before his brow of might and confidence; they read, in awful characters imprinted on it, their certain perdition; and all their hopes wither in the conviction that his assurance, thus expressed and vindicated, cannot be disappointed. The "souls under the altar" become

importunate, their blood utters its voice to mingle with their prayer, and they exclaim, "How long, O Lord, holy and true." Expostulation ascends from earth, and "the elect cry day and night unto God." Even this vehement longing descends still lower, and "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The very frame of nature is seized with this emotion, and "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The "vanity," which yet debases the creature, shall be speedily removed and his use be vindicated,—the teeming birth of the material system shall make it forget its pain,—"the floods shall clap their hands, and the hills be joyful together before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth."

And thus, dear Christians, if we ourselves conceive this expectation, if we yield up our hearts to it, with what a kindred of all that is holy and lovely are we united, with what a general impulse are we urged forward, what a cloud of witnesses is present to our eye, what a unison of voices bursts upon our ear! Into what a fellowship have we entered! What a sympathy do we share! We lean upon the bosom of Jesus until our heart catches the glow, and returns the throb, of His!

It remains for us to contemplate this Expectation

In the Certainty of its realization.

He is not described by the text as active to seize it. In many points of view his part is fulfilled. His task is accomplished. Other agency is now chiefly to be employed. Whatever devolves upon him must be consistent with a state of reward and rest. And the language denotes that there is a train of arrangements, a system of causes, which will infallibly terminate in this result. He therefore awaits it *now* as sure, and *soon* as real. "For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my *rest*, and I will *consider in my dwelling place*, like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of har-

vest:" his repose and meditation like the purest sunshine and the softest vapour.

Argumentation is vain when the certainties are so absolute,—but the following reasons may be assigned:

Explicit engagement. The manner in which the Son obeyed the will of the Father,—the proof that he was always "about it," that it was "his meat to do it,"—must reflect the necessary converse, that whatever the Father promised, shall be completely ratified and deserved. These pledges illustrate the "purpose purposed in Christ." It involves official subserviency and personal condescension: it ensures official recompense and personal exaltation. As by office, and as in person, he was made lower than his Co-equals in the Godhead, so now that *office* challenges a *distinctive* homage, and so that *person* emits a *peculiar* glory. With this reference, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Jesus the Lord cited this passage in the days of his flesh, and with it confounded the enemies of his Divinity. "If, then, David called *him Lord*, how is *he* his *Son?*" He did not explain, but they felt the rebuke: and ere the Scripture was closed he "sent and testified in the churches, I am the *Root* and *Offspring* of David!" This declaration of truth must therefore be fulfilled. And what can be more beautiful than the confidence which the Saviour always evinces when surrounded by the circumstances of his deepest depression: "I have set the Lord always before me." "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." "I knew that thou hearest me always." "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."

Mediatorial government necessitates this final act.

"He is the head over all things." "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." "In all things he must have the pre-eminence." He must deliver

its subjects, sustain its principles, and confirm its ends. But all is subject to misinterpretation, and exposed to confusion, if its enemies are left to their way unpunished, and their onsets are borne unrepelled. As that government or kingdom is to be "delivered up to God even the Father," it must be resigned in its perfect state. It must be cleared of every imputation, and lifted above every charge. This, therefore, cannot be while the powers of evil are "going about seeking whom they may devour." Having gone forth to war, he cannot return without making his enemies captive. He re-appears with no empty pageant, he advances with no barren triumph: he drags at his chariot-wheel the dire and ruthless adversaries of holiness and peace. "He puts down all rule, and all authority and power." And when he has at last reduced them to "his footstool,"—then will he lay aside the badges of his specific royalty, will dissolve the particular modification of universal government over which he now presides, will merge all distinctions into an economy which shall eternally exist without recurrence of evil or appearance of foe,—though his Person will forever be the object of unreserved worship, and the medium of divine manifestation.

Conscious right secures this realization. Men may mistake their claims, but the Saviour perfectly weighs his own. He deserves not an enemy. His is "a right sceptre." He knows that the subjugation of every enemy is just. Even he indignantly regards them. "His fury, it upholds him." "He will heap mischiefs upon them, and spend his arrows upon them." "He will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them." His patience, his meekness, his commiseration, can no longer endure that the benevolent purpose of his heart should be resisted; and he "pours out his indignation" upon the enemies who have refused to be comprehended in it themselves, and have sought to oppose its extension to

others. "*The Son is angry!*" "*It is the wrath of the Lamb!*" What a necessity must there consequently arise for this retribution; and how unblenching the resolve must be to "ease him of his adversaries, and avenge him of his enemies," which can be formed in such a gracious heart, and be mused with such a calm complacency.

Nothing, then, can convict *us* of *unreasonableness* when we indulge this expectation. Does omniscience forecast, and infallibility certify, it? What, then, if scorn be our lot? What if, when we surrender ourselves to this hope, we be regarded as visionary? Nothing, but that which invalidates its certainty and impeaches its propriety, can deny our right and annul our duty, to share in it. If for us it is idle, and for us it is vindictive, then need not Jesus await, then should not Jesus foster, it. We only catch the glow of his bosom, we only follow the direction of his eye. Nor can we fail to perceive that in this emulation, whatever would be otherwise extravagant is redeemed. "We know that our Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day on the earth." "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." The infatuation is with them who boast that they can descry a different result. "Their expectation shall perish." He "frustrateth the tokens of these liars, and maketh these diviners mad." "Their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten." But how rational will seem their part, how appropriate their temper, who "against hope believed in hope," who "waited for the Son of God from heaven," who "looked for and hasted unto the coming of the day of God!" They have a warrant which nothing can weaken, and a confidence which nothing can shake. "They that wait for him shall not be ashamed." And they bind this hope to them without acrimony or malevolence. They desire the era of peace. They would keep the festival of love. Rancour fills not their breast. Resentment envenoms not their tongue.

The very overthrow they seek, is but the necessary sacrifice for the triumph of happines, and the ascendancy of good. And the Avenger will let these enemies "fall by their own counsels; he will cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against him."

It must therefore follow, that we should imitate the Saviour in the *manner* of contemplating this future victory. He "expects" it. With the impression of his wounds still inhering in his flesh, he "with patience waits for it." Little have we done to promote it, little do our spirits conform to it, yet we are displeased with the delay. We would give each event a straighter impulse, we would desire for time a swifter wing. It is an affected feeling—and oft a sorry plea. Our task is prescribed. On us the honour is devolved of taking a part towards the accomplishment of the Expectation. As soon might the clay remonstrate with the independence of the potter, as soon the "axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith," as we complain of our allotted labour and deferred hope. "The worm Jacob," blind as feeble, must not arraign "the Father's power over the times and seasons," nor "count the Lord slack concerning his promise." "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Actively let us serve, meekly let us wait; ready to strive, resigned to suffer; and "go our way till the end be; for we shall rest and stand in our lot at the end of the days."

It is important, too, that we expect the same issue which, at this moment, the ascended Son of God anticipates. Let us take heed that we suspend it on no favourite hypothesis. Let us not flush the horizon with the colours of our vain imagination. Let us not seek a *sectarian* triumph. Let us be prepared to exult in it, whatever it may be, knowing that wherever it contradicts us, it only opposes so much ignorance, prejudice, and sin: it can reverse no real interest, it can crush no worthy

hope. The altar of victory shall be dedicated to truth and righteousness; and bigotry and partizanship, instead of being priest or god, shall bleed as one of its earliest offerings.

Ah, the happiness of yielding ourselves to our Sovereign Redeemer! "He has bought us with a price." No longer are we Satan's slaves, but the "Lord's freemen." No longer do we fight against God, but "the haters of the Lord have submitted themselves unto him." What a fellowship have we entered! "Being joined to the Lord we are one spirit!" His plan, his cause, his expectation, are our own. "We are labourers together with him." We are committed to his success; and are warmed with his benevolence. "We flow together to the goodness of the Lord." We follow an infinite movement, an almighty sway. "We are made willing in the day of his power." And are any of you disposed to resist? Are you hardened to disobey? Cast, cast yourselves at his feet; cast yourselves where otherwise you must lie; embrace those feet while you bow before them, that you be not trodden beneath them; wash them with your tears that they may not at last spurn you, and make you their footstool! He shall not want the allegiance which proves the beneficence, nor the overthrow which vindicates the supremacy, of his rule! "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee!"

"If you will walk contrary to him, He will walk contrary unto you!"

SERMON IX.

THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY.

HEBREWS xi. 16.

"BUT NOW THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY, THAT IS, AN HEAVENLY: WHEREFORE GOD IS NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED THEIR GOD: FOR HE HATH PREPARED FOR THEM A CITY."

THE emigrant who, in any degree, feels the native tie, and cherishes the patriot throb,—who, to any extent, loves the birth-place of his friends, and the burying-place of his fathers,—cannot uproot himself from his proper soil without painful efforts and bitter struggles. You need not ascribe to him any excess of sentiment, any poetry of character, aught of romance, an approach to refinement: allow him his proportion of our common nature, and the pang of the separation which tears him from his country's attachments, and banishes him from his country's scenes, will well-nigh divide his heart. Wild and haggard may be the region where first he drew his breath; a region of iron boundary, cheerless frost, and immitigable sterility. But what skies can reflect so much beauty? What landscapes can picture such sweet content? All, however bleak and desolate, has an attraction for his taste. The loud tempest is his refreshment, the hoarse torrent his music, the dark forest his shade, the ocean-breaker his sport. Forced to leave it, that land becomes more than ever endeared. He hurries forth from it, and fears to look on it again while he heaves his farewell-sigh, and

breathes his farewell-blessing. Follow him into fairer climes. He is an alien there. A sense of strangeness is upon him. Long will it be ere he can make another haunt, long before he can find another association. His eye rests on no storied spot, he listens to no minstrelsy of infant days. His recollection can extract no legend of marvel, and his fancy evoke no image of tenderness. Here is nothing to mingle with his earliest dream, nothing to identify itself with his youthful aspiration. Of all its tales, none does he recall; and of all its monuments, none stand before him clothed with the interest, and mellowed by the dimness, of the past. The yesterday, which renders to-day consistent and continuous, is to him unknown. Each object rises in abrupt detail, each history happens in broken passages. He is surrounded by a world of fragments. No gradual process of light insinuates into his mind, the reality breaks in upon it with a rude violence, and a searing glare. True it is, that the exchange of habitations may seem advantageous. Softer gales shall now fan him, sweeter flowers perfume him: more enamelled meads may dispread themselves to his sight, and more melodious waterfalls murmur on his ear. Before him may combine the luxuriance of nature, and the triumph of art. But the days of his childhood fall like a charm over his childhood's home: and that home, though rocked by the tempest, and naked as the wild, is still,—whithersoever be his wandering, wherever be his residence,—his heart's centre, his spirit's rest. "Weep ye not for the dead," exclaims the prophet, "neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country."

There is a "land which is far off." No mortal sense has discerned, no mortal footstep touched, it. From its bourne no traveller returns. It lies not within the range of lower space. Whatever its materialism, the elements which compose it are not of the same kind with the gross

and perishable substance which encloses and constitutes this abode. Its order of feeling, its mode of existence, must strike us as most different from our own. To pass its precincts, to be numbered with its inhabitants, presupposes the most memorable revolution in the whole progress of our being. No transition which can await and affect our being, must be compared with this. Though it does not destroy the continuity of that being, it produces a change upon it which leaves such continuity an inexplicable problem to all our habitudes of thought. Little of our present knowledge, founded as it is on our exigencies and ailments, can subserve the purposes of that world where only light shines and intellect prevails: few of our feelings can survive to flow in those channels of high and holy love. It is a region which presents almost every point of opposition to this. "The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Every revelation of it, every idea or attempt after idea, impresses us with its character of a dread novelty. Where are its flaming bounds and bulwarks? Where its awful portals? Where its glorious realms? Where its infinite tracks? To enter it, implies a "departure out of this world," to which no reverse of this world's extremes could be reasonably assimilated. Let us be transported to the uttermost parts of the earth, still there the sea roars, and the sun circuits: the blast contains the breath of life, and the uncouth aboriginal is our brother-man. But *this*, in every acceptation of language, is another world, and another being. And let the immortal, who from our lower earth expects soon to pass into that, be most perfectly warranted to assure himself of peace in the way, and safety in the arrival; yet there are circumstances which may even induce him to pause, and all but make him desire to recede. The absence of all that can familiarize is a check to his ardour. He knows, and has

tried, this scene: he must now migrate to a country strange, and in which he is inexperienced. He must forget the change of day and night, summer and winter: he must abandon animal instinct and social institution: he must lay aside the store of bodily and mental labour: he must close his eye on that smiling group which shared his morning embrace, and his evening blessing. "It is certain," that of all that he has acquired, and of all that may cling to him, "he can carry nothing out."—And then, too, the only avenue to this land for which he departs, is through the appalling transformation of death. It is so "appointed," nor is there chariot to help us in its evasion. If we "are alive and remain" to hear the trumpet which shall wake around us all the dead, "the last trump" shall signalize a "change" on us, not less humbling and severe. It is only natural to fear death, and christian faith does not destroy that nature, but introduces considerations stronger and more absorbing than its fear. Death is, in itself, a fatal loss, and vast must be the indemnity to make it gain. Death itself is a terrible evil, and immense must be the counteraction to turn it into good.—Nor is this all. Who people that unseen country? Not creatures of flesh and blood, not the earthly forms of our interest and love,—but a spectral race. Spirits there have their element and home. And have we not shrunk at the recital, however suppositious, of their visitation to earth? Have we not shuddered, when even in the paroxysm of grief we have besought the remembrance and apostrophised the manes of departed friends, lest we should be answered by their spirit-voice, and folded in their shadowy bosom? And it is often a thought of intense anxiety to the saint, that a spirit himself, his converse shall soon be confined to spirits. And it is not an Enoch and an Elijah who, by their human array, can quench the ghastly apprehension: it is the Glorified Humanity of Jesus, the "last Adam who is made a quickening spirit."

What then can relieve the deep solicitudes of him who stands on the verge of life, and puts forth his foot for this mysterious journey? What can cause him to feel each foot-fall, along that path, safe and pleasant? What can give him assured peace, as he steps across the confines of that solemn land, and as at that moment he becomes a spiritual citizen of a spiritual world?

It is delightful for us to know that the comparisons we have hitherto employed, and which we think perfectly just in our use of them, if man had no stricter information than his reason supplies,—are greatly mitigated and really destroyed by the *present condition of the Christian pilgrim drawing near to heaven!* For heaven is *not* to him a *state* of view and emotion wholly *new*, though he has not explored its *scene*. Let the traveller, however remote his stray, find something congenial to his own latitude and country, and the sense of alienation is redeemed. Should he unexpectedly discover the daisy of his native fields, or catch the wood-note that had carolled from his native groves,—should he hear his mother-tongue, should he enjoy the right and protection of some institution at which his youthful heart had learnt to bound,—though the earth's diameter struck through between his sojourn and his own dear land, even that sojourn would only be less to him than home. And the Christian has now much akin to heaven. His heart is there. Eternal life abides in him. Now he possesses the principles which heaven but matures, and cherishes the affections which it but expands. Hence the *connection* between the present and the future. Here must be the *heir*, if yonder be his *inheritance*. Here must be the *labourer*, if yonder be his *rest*. Here must be the *candidate*, if yonder be his *reward*. *As* he now adds excellence to excellence, as he is not "barren nor unfruitful," "*so* shall an entrance be ministered to him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ." *Thus* he "comes to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," though still himself in the body, and subject to all the requirements of this mortal life. It is the same song which he sings in the "house of his pilgrimage," and in "his Father's house:" a fainter, and sometimes a broken, strain while toiling on the road, swelling to its most ecstatic compass when he reaches the threshold of endless security and joy. Oh! fair, and bright, and inconceivable as is the Celestial, it shall overpower no true principle, it shall reverse no just feeling: nor can it burst strangely upon them who have "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and *full of glory*."—And again does the comparison fail. Have we supposed a *home* and *then* an exile? and the anguish of abandoning the one and going into the other? These parallels must be transposed. *This* is the Christian's exile,—*there* is his home! He is born from above. He is of God. Whatever his present lot, whatever his share of this world's good, his "*portion* is *not* in this life," he has "in heaven a better and more enduring substance." Welcome to him shall be the mission of that angel who comes to take him hence. It will be the captive's return! Then will the exile hasten to be loosed! He shall be seen going up to his father-land. He leaves strangers for kindred. He forsakes bondage for liberty, poverty for wealth, pain for pleasure, combat for triumph, turmoil for rest, sin for holiness, death for immortality. Nor can he know one gloomy disappointment. No casualty has injured, no death has invaded, the scene. Breathless has often been the suspense, agonizing the conviction, of the traveller when he has sought a parent's or a brother's house. The last request of the expiring patriot is, that he may be laid in his country's mould. Nor is there a faster bond than that which unites the free-born to the place of his fathers' sepulchres. But the Christian "way-faring man" need indulge no such fore-

boding. He may repair from his captivity to his country, and no urn shall fix his mournful gaze, and no grave sadly invite him to go and weep there. Infirmity is only an idea necessary in remembering what was, and death is a recollection but incidental to "the former things which are passed away."

And we are now carried back to a distant date of time. The interesting record, contained in the text, of patriarchal simplicity and intentness, exhibits the concordance of true religion under every dispensation. And shame may well scorch our cheek, and cast down our spirit, if we, with our clearer illuminations and nobler privileges, should still hold to a world which, without reluctance, they resigned; nor pant for a "better country, because a heavenly one," after which they so greatly and constantly pursued, now that it does not arise, as it did to them, enveloped in haze, and shrouded in figure,—but spreads itself out with a definiteness of outline, and basks glowingly beneath splendours which those "new heavens" alone can shed on that "new earth," in both of which "dwelleth righteousness."

I. We propose to examine the argument of the text, so far as it justifies that spiritual and heavenly perception which these persons exhibited.

"But now they desire,"—that is, it is plainly indicated by their entire conduct,—"a better country, that is a heavenly." The eldest born of the church,—the fathers of that holy line which yet extends, and shall always be succeeded by a holy progeny until the perfection of its number and glory,—were in a particular state, and under a "carnal dispensation," which might have been expected to induce, if not suffered to excuse, a secularity of mind. But instead of yielding themselves to what was low and grovelling in hope, whenever they received a mixed promise, they separated what was spiritual from what was temporary: and far from terminating their desires upon

the earthly, always rose to the standard of the heavenly. They were not disposed to overlook the settlement of their posterity, and to neglect the fortunes of the nation which should descend from them: but they knew "the things which differ," and esteemed "the glory of the terrestrial to be one, and the glory of the celestial to be another." They were thankful for that land which their seed should occupy; but it was not Siloam's stream, nor Ephron's palm which filled their hearts with their "chief joy,"—another river made them glad, and another tree gave them its "fruit for meat, and its leaf for medicine." ——Abraham was called from Chaldea to be the father and prototype of the faithful in every age. No event is more singular and comprehensive. The most important transactions proceed from it. "From hence is the Shepherd and the Stone of Israel." His two immediate successors participate in his honour, and the Triune Jehovah pledges himself to this saintly triad. "This is His name forever: and his memorial unto all generations." There may be a mystery of the Persons in the oath,—the "faithful Creator," the "Man-victim," the "Spirit of supplication." Not, however, to press this idea, let us remark the conduct of this great ancestor. He "obeyed." He believed that the distant country which he was commanded to visit should be for "his inheritance." Unheard of by him, even to its very name, "he went out, not knowing whither he went." Having reached it, "he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country." "He dwelt in tents," more durable habitations being denied him,—"with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise." Though God had sworn by himself, though the symbols of his majesty had moved between the disparted members of the sacrifice, yet only is the *reversion* of Canaan granted to "his friend." And the stranger learns that centuries must elapse before his descendants shall take possession of it. Did he repine?

Did he, upon a more delayed fulfilment than had been surmised, "stagger through unbelief?" A *better* construction occurred to his mind. The land had been promised to *him*. But literally it could only belong to the people who shall spring from him. Was it in no sense *his?* Was there no *personal* blessing, when, for his protection and that of his patriarchal children, "though few in number, yea, very few, and strangers in it, God reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm?" He, in common with them, felt no disappointment. The less was distantly future: the greater was near and real. The noble and fertile territory which they should never till and rule, and in which their ashes should only claim a tomb, led them at once to a richer interpretation of the promise. As they looked forth upon it, from point to point, from mountain to mountain,—as it smiled in its beauty, and swelled in its grandeur,—as the breeze bore its treasured sweets, and harped its wild symphonies,—*this* was the suggestion of their minds, that a land whose every breath was fragrance, and every well-spring music, was never intended to bound their views and sate their cravings, but was furnished to be the type of spiritual existence. "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And they "plainly declared that they sought a country,"—surely not that which they had quitted, surely not that which their children could not enjoy for ages,—then it was not terrene: and if a "better" it must be "heavenly."

How false and debasing, we may cursorily observe, is the theory which restricts the knowledge, and even religion, of the ancient saints to a *providential* government, rather than allowing it a reference to invisible sanctions. Such a government did obtain, but it respected its *own* evidence: while the piety of its subjects entirely depended upon a belief of eternal rewards. Without this, the piety

which regarded arrangements simply confined to this life, though they were most *immediately divine,* would be nothing more than a balance of practical convenience, an adjustment of earthly good. With what force and satisfaction of conviction does this inspired comment on patriarchal history make its appeal to us: and with what absolute authority does it exonerate the heaven-commissioned claimants on that promised land from the cupidity of spoil, and the ambition of conquest.*

It tends also, when we dwell upon these annals of ancient spiritual-mindedness, to vindicate the clearness, as well as depth, of piety, which were proportioned to the revelation then known. Certainly these founders of Israel were hardly, if at all, eclipsed by any of their descendants. They saw the visions of the Almighty. With infrequent exceptions, a retrograde seems to have taken place after they "had gathered up their feet." And though a single star may have risen here and there of brighter ray in that hemisphere, such a resplendent constellation was never equalled amid all its hosts. Happy would it have been for the Jewish Church, if the "kindness of its youth," and "the love of its espousals," had been perpetuated through the progress of its age, and by the constancy of its fidelity.

But it was upon no constructive reasoning of their own that they superinduced their hope. Faith must have a testimony, and expectation a ground. The warrant is thus stated: "God is not ashamed to be called *their God.*" He had entered into covenant with them. He attested that relation with particular seals, and founded it upon particular promises. And our inquiry must be

* In these animadversions the great features of Warburton's hypothesis are noticed. The author would desire all to read the "Divine Legation," as he knows not a writer in greater favour with himself, nor one from whose *episodes* he has derived more instruction. Dean Graves, on the Pentateuch, should be consulted at the same time for a corrective.

into the connection between such a compact, and the reasonableness of their hope, that there was a "better country:" in other words, to justify from the tenour of the one, the fitness of the other.

Now so great a stipulation, so solemn a pledge, as Jehovah swore to these patriarchs, could only be interpreted into a spiritual boon. A grant of soil, a promise of posterity, would not have required nor admitted this majesty of formula, and seriousness of protestation. He only becomes *our God* in a manner worthy of his *moral* grandeur, and our *religious* capability. And we have the exposition of its meaning from the lips of Jesus Christ himself. "Have ye not read," said he to his captious assailants, "that which was spoken unto you by God, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the *God of the dead*, but of the *living*." Be it remembered that this was spoken originally "touching the *resurrection of the dead*." But intermediately there was a *subsisting life*. God can stand in no relation of covenant to the dead, for the spirit's self always lives, and its life is the earnest of the body's renovation. This, then, is the argument: He was *their God:* he would remain their God when their dust mingled with the clods of the country which they should never possess: but he is God of the *living only:* therefore they should live as long as it continued true that he was their God: their conscious spirits must consequently wing their flight to a separate state where spirits find their home: and if the spirit was made happy in the inheritance of "a heavenly country," the corresponding frame could not be forgotten by Him who had bound himself to the safety and good of the *whole* man.

And well they reasoned from the letter to the spirit of the covenant: justly they concluded that He who engaged himself,—on the very honour of his perfections, and on the very security of his resources,—to be their God, had

"reserved better things for them." "The *Lord* was the *portion of their souls*; therefore did they trust in him." Their eye grew indifferent to the "glory of all lands;" for they were rapt in contemplations of a celestial scene over which their Covenant God, having invited and entitled them to it by the most explicit ratifications, would array all "his beauty," and diffuse all "his goodness."

Nor let us deem that covenant dissolved. We claim it still, while it unfolds far clearer signs and ampler promises,—"He is our God, and we are his people." It rests upon an undying priesthood and suretyship. It has characterized all dispensations, and shall survive all. However they may be "shaken," this is of "the things which cannot be shaken, but must remain." And therefore is there often seen in the statements of the New Testament, and the predictions of the Old, almost an appearance of anxiety that the *covenant with the patriarchs* should be remembered by us in its *original terms.* We are called on to pass under its bond, and to renew it for ourselves. "We are blessed with faithful Abraham." "We, as Isaac was, are children of the promise." "We call ourselves by the name of Jacob, and surname ourselves the name of Israel." "He hath commanded his covenant forever!"

II. It is now proper that we should attend to that particular object of desire which these patriarchs believed to exist in consequence of such Divine relationship.

Abraham had been apprized that his descendants should be in servitude and oppression during four hundred years. He was only a stranger in the land, and never had a greater possession in it than that of a burying-place. Even this he acquired not under the guarantee of promise, but according to the valuation of its owner, and by purchase in "the current money of the merchant." His son and grandson knew this, and there-

fore entertained no hope of calling the land in which they sojourned, at any period of their lives, their own. They desired it not: but "*a better country.*"

But a "better country" than this, earth did not contain. It was "a delightsome," and "a pleasant land;" "a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations." It was variegated and intersected with all the elements of sublimity and beauty, with whatever was bold and gentle. It was prolific without a miracle, and the subject of a periodical one. It was a wealthy place. Aromatic herbs covered its hills, and the fairest flowers decked its glens. The rose was in Sharon, and the lily in the valleys. The voice of the turtle was heard in the land. There roamed the vine, and there clustered the date, and there hung the pomegranate. The cedar towered on the mountains, and the myrtle skirted their sides. No human hand could raise the clusters of Eschol. The south wind passing over the gardens, caused the spices thereof to flow out. The seasons revolved in their variety, but with a blended sweetness. There was the upland breeze, in which the fir could wave its arms, and the softer air in which the olive unfolded its blossoms. The sun smote not by day, nor the moon by night. The birds sang among the branches. The dew lay thick on Hermon. There was balm in Gilead. The lign-aloe drooped from the river-bank. Kedron and Jordan poured forth their streams. The rain also filled the pools. Lakes glistened in the landscape, and cooled the drought. Beautiful, for situation, was mount Sion. The cattle browsed on a thousand hills. The excellency of Carmel, and the glory of Lebanon, set their pinnacles against the deep azure of Canaan's sky. The year was crowned with goodness. The Lord God cared for that land, and his eyes were always upon it. At the stated periods fell the early and the latter rain. The pastures were clothed with flocks. The ploughman overtook the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that

sowed seed. The barns were filled with plenty, and the presses burst out with new wine. The little hills rejoiced on every side. Precious fruits were brought forth by the sun, and precious things were put forth by the moon. The earliest pass, the valley of Achor, was a door of hope. The vineyards distilled the pure blood of the grape. The fountain of Jacob was upon a land of corn and wine. The inhabitants were filled with the finest of the wheat. It flowed with milk and honey. Its heavens dropped fatness. It was surrounded with munitions of rock. The deep, couching beneath, spread its sure defence. The land might be called Beulah. The distant glimpse of its prospect refreshed the dying eye of Moses; and of all thine earthly territory, is emphatically thy land, O Immanuel!

When therefore the comparison is employed respecting this country, we may be sure that its superiority is not one of earthly climate—a more salubrious atmosphere, a more exuberant soil—for a better country than Palestine the horizon did not gird, the sky did not pavilion: the comparison must be justified by adducing qualities which belong to no sublunary scene, and no earthly condition. And it is "better" as it is,

1. *The Antitype of that land.*

You can easily understand that an emblem should be inferior to the reality. It would be unfitting, were the first to exceed the second. Such a transposition would be unnatural. The herald does not equal the personage of his announcement. The index cannot compare with the object of its direction. And in like manner there may be a type of the celestial world. A country of confined space may intimate its extent; a stability of definite duration may figure its permanency. This is all that material symbols can denote of pure spiritualism: this is all that human conceptions can comprehend of eternal existence. We cannot have "the very image of these things:" we must be content with the truest representations of which

either they admit, or which our mediums can receive. And that the country which the patriarchs visited, just tarrying to pitch a tent or buy a tomb, was such an earnest of heaven, is demonstrative from the text. If they "desired a better," there were some points of parity, and some suggestions of relation, between it and that. When "leaning upon the top of their staff" they took their survey and made their resignation of the one, it was because the one stood in the order of picture and pledge to the other. It was therefore only reasonable that, when they learnt that this land, "the joy of the whole earth," was the specimen and surety of another, it must be a "better,"—else why this furniture of illustration for that which had no transcending claim? These wandering saints were reminded and reassured of a glorious reversion by the fruitfulness and beauty of the realms through which they passed: but they wished not to linger there for the moment which detained them from an entrance into that fairer and more resplendent scene, of which it was the imperfect sign and inconsiderable instalment. With no indifferent eye did they look forth on that enchanting prospect,—with no spurning footstep did they disdain that votive ground,—with no listless ear did they drink in "the melodies of woods, and winds, and waters."* But these were only the ministrations of external sense to their piercing faith, and "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things."—And if this was the antitype towards which the pilgrim hastened, and for which the patriarch sighed, it must be "better" than the terrestrial land,—since it was

2. *The spiritual perfection of its sensible immunities.*

It will be perceived that nothing can be more foreign from our design than to disparage the country which God promised to the fathers. It would be treason to the rhetoric, as well as strength, of the argument. That

* Coleridge.

country can scarcely be delineated with too fascinating and imposing hues. It had the spontaneousness and verdure of a Paradise. But it was "of the earth, earthy." Its mercies and privileges belonged to the present state: but if "better" can be found, it must be by the conversion of what is external into blessings which are native to the soul, and enduring as eternity.

Did that country descend by *inheritance?* "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but the Lord's right hand, and his arm, and the light of his countenance, because he had a favour unto them." Constantly is it called "their own land." Constantly are they said to "inherit the land." They were regarded as its destined proprietors. "The inhabitants of Canaan melted away: sorrow took hold of the inhabitants of Palestina: and God brought his people in and planted them in the mountain of his inheritance." —So "the righteous shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world." "In Christ also we have obtained an inheritance." And it "is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away."

Was that country given by *promise?* The engagement into which Jehovah entered with the fathers he never forgot. He heard the cry of his people "out of the iron furnace:" "he knew their walking through the great wilderness:" "he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant; and brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness."—So "this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." It is "the promise of eternal inheritance;" and they who obtain it, realizing all in one, "inherit the promises."

That country was the abode of *satisfaction.* Its name was associated with plenty. The inhabitants "eat that which was good, and delighted in fatness." "It was not as the land of Egypt, where they sowed the seed," and by the process of irrigation "watered it with their font, as a

garden of herbs: but it was a land of hills and vallies, and drank water of the rain of heaven." The manna, "the rock which followed them," and the other miraculous supplies, were now superseded. And yet, in the idea of physical abundance, there is somewhat cloying. Appetite is soon sated and palled. We disgust what we desired; we loathe what we loved.—And it is only in religion we can discover the secret of happiness rising with its means, and the possibility of enjoyment through all its additions. And it is only in heaven that this faculty can fully expand. There is constant longing,—there exhaustless supply,—and there unabating zest. Impressive is the beauty with which this thought is imaged: "They shall *hunger* no more, neither *thirst* any more,"—they shall not experience one painful sense of want and craving,—"For the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall *feed* them, and shall lead them unto *living fountains of waters*,"—the wish, so to speak, never having time to become the uneasy dearth, being swallowed up, at each moment, in the infinite plenitude.

That country was the asylum of *life*. Genial air and high cultivation procured many sources of health. There were plants of kindliest virtues. But rather do we now allude to the promise of longevity. "That thy life may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," sanctions "the first commandment with promise." "Length of days," is a reward frequently proposed to encourage the ancient piety and zeal. These are denominated "the days of heaven upon the earth." How many were the harms from which they were now protected while "sitting under their vine and their fig-tree!" How innocently jocund was youth, and how serenely meek was age, "old men and old women dwelling in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age: and the streets of the city full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof!" And if "the carcases of

them who believed not fell in the wilderness," and "with long life" they were blessed who entered into the promised land, yet this was not an invariable bestowment nor necessary good. Often was it interrupted, and a "Jesse went for an old man in the days of Saul."—It is in heaven that we shall "reign in life." The immortality of the wicked is never called "eternal life." For it wants the honours, the joys, the ends of life; and though they live, it is as they now are, "they are dead while they live." But the righteous "go into life eternal." And there is no stronger expression that the Saviour can use; and though he speaks of present recompense to his self-denying follower as in the measure of "a hundred fold," with compressed simplicity and dignity he but promises, "and in the world to come, eternal life."

That country was the seat of *rest*. No more did the tribes wander in the desert; no more were they harassed by march after march, still leaving the destined goal; no more were they smitten before their enemies, but "Jerusalem was a quiet habitation," and "Israel dwelt safely." "As a beast goeth down into the valley," invited after its labour by the cooling shade, "the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest."—And a "promise is left us of entering into rest." There are moments when we should welcome, perchance, the retreat of any kind from mortal bitterness, and even pointing to the grave might say, "there the weary are at rest!" And this is true, if we carry not a thought, if we wing not a hope, beyond its margin. The grave how still, how tranquil! Its inmates suffer no adversity, foment no strife, harbour no fear. They "know not any thing." "Their thoughts perish." The rich and the poor meet together, the proud and the mean are laid beside each other, captives are as bold as conquerors, slaves are as attended as kings, neither is there advance nor repulse, disdain nor recrimination, the equality of mankind here adduces its proof, and the spirit

of levelling here gluts its rage; without a distinction, an annoyance, a passion, they are all at rest. There is the one house appointed for all living; the bed on which all await their sure, their last, and it may be, their only repose. Thither we may escape from the din and bustle of the world,—its follies will not pursue us, its excitements will not agitate us, its votaries will not disturb us. There only can we be secured from the inroad of its cares, and be withdrawn from the jar of its discords. Thither we may escape from the passions which consume all earthly peace, the gnawing of envy, the canker of avarice, the sting of remorse, the tumult of vengeance, the fang of despair. The fever which parched our blood shall chill, the fierce throbbings of desire shall subside, and the uproar of contending lusts shall settle and hush into the quiet of our kindred earth. Thither we may escape from each skiey influence, the summer's drought and winter's cold will fall alike unheeded on our dwelling, spring will not mock by its budding, nor autumn sadden us by its decay. Thither we may escape from the keen inflictions of poverty; we shall all of us have the apparel, tenement, pillow, and service we can want. Thither we may escape from the painful days and wearisome nights appointed to us: our eyes will not be held waking, nor will our sleep depart from us. Thither we may escape from the broken heart which bereavement has smitten; a parent or a child may be let down into the grave where we moulder and yet shall we not weep. Thither we may escape from slander and detraction; their rumour will not taint our peace nor reach our abode. Thither we may escape from insensibility, unkindness, and ingratitude; there can be no colder hearts than those which then perish in our bosoms, to beat and warm no more. It is a moody thing to say, "there is rest!" Can this be all? It is a common lot. To all our race the grave throws open such dreary refuge. Thousands hide themselves in this sanctuary,

loaded with most direful guilt, pursued with most execrated memory. And is there no *rest* to which the *spirit* of the Christian springs? Is there no *quiet* reserved for it but the undreaming sleep of the guilty dead? Is this the end of his faith,—the cessation of remembrance, the extinction of consciousness, the destruction of thought? Is this the consummation of his hope,—reduced to the clay and the clod? Shall not his spirit, when his flesh rests in its bed, walk in its uprightness? Shall he not, when he falls asleep in Jesus, awake in his image? Shall not he who died in the Lord be present with the Lord? Oh, beyond that dull, that common, that debasing stupor, "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." We will not point to the grave, and welcome, as our rest, the defence from trouble, and release from care, which it affords; we will look to the heavens for the Peace of our Sabbath, for the Security of our Refuge, for the Endearment of our Home!—Nor let us imagine, when "we rest from our labours," that our minds shall become inert: or that we shall cease to be creatures of duty. Obedience must always be the happiest, and only happy, condition of man. But many of our present obligations spring out of our sinful state: we "war with the flesh," we "watch lest we enter into temptation," we "resist the devil that he may flee from us." These exercises must be painful. But in the "heavenly country," "the Lord will give us rest from our enemies round about," there will be no danger demanding vigilance, nor evil tasking repulse.

And it is a better country than that which these patriarchs now traversed, for it

3. Completes and perpetuates all the religious advantages and recommendations which they anticipated as forming the true dignity of that land.

"The excellency of Jacob" did not depend upon simply physical blessings. "Its trees were full of sap;" honey dropped from its rocks; it was overspread with "grass for

the cattle, and herb for the service of man;" "it was enriched with the river of God, which is full of water;" "the outgoings of its morning and evening rejoiced;" "all the chief spices" perfumed its air, and "a plentiful rain confirmed this inheritance when it was weary." Beautiful was Tirzah, and comely was Jerusalem. But "glory dwelt in the land." It was the one which "God had chosen for himself." He, when "he divided to the nations their inheritance, set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." "A glorious high throne was its sanctuary." "What nation was so great, who had God so nigh unto them? What nation was there so great, that had statutes and judgments so righteous?" It was the high place of sacrifice to the whole earth. It was the holy precinct in which dwelt the symbols of the divine glory, and in which were solemnized the ministrations of the divine service. And its characteristic glories were those of *purity* and *worship*.

There was a *distinctive holiness*. The very soil claimed this appropriation; and when its inhabitants denied this to it, then were "they scattered among the heathen, that the land might enjoy her sabbaths." The people were incorporated into a church, which is repeatedly called "the congregation;" and our Saviour acknowledged it as a "fold." Paul, too, recognized its members as sons and heirs "under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father." Periods were enumerated to them by a calendar of sacred feasts. When first they entered that country, it was under most solemn impressions. "Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." The "dwelling-place" which Jehovah had "desired for his rest" was "a habitation of justice and mountain of holiness." Inspiration expressly calls Canaan "the holy land;"* and it deserved the title better when Immanuel "came unto his own," "came unto his

* Zech. ii. 12.

temple." And, though poetry may have idolized, and chivalry have profaned, the localities of "those holy fields over whose acres walked those blessed feet, which eighteen hundred years ago were nailed, for our advantage, on the bitter cross,"*—still who could tread it as common ground, and sternly dispel the visions which hover around it? And yet how much of the sanctity which impressed itself on that land is extrinsic and accidental—of the nature of association, and dependent on sentiment! How stiff-necked was the people! The prophets prophesied falsely! The offering of the Lord was abhorred! The ways of Zion mourned! They spake all manner of blasphemy against the Son of man! They crucified the Lord of glory! But the holiness of that country which the patriarchs sought was not imaginary and mutable: it is sincere, perfect, and abiding. It can never exhibit the spot of deformity, or the wrinkle of decay. The happy people who inhabit it "stand without fault before the throne of God." They can no more come into condemnation, nor be ensnared by sin. Exemption from every kind of evil is their reward. "Nothing can enter it which defileth." The purity is resplendent as the sea of glass, and exhaustless as the river of life. The mind cannot suffer the momentary contamination of vain thought. The heart cannot waver with momentary influence of an irregular desire. Each breath is praise, each feeling love, each act obedience. Nothing shall suggest doubt of others, or demand jealousy over ourselves. "The people are all righteous." That is the Holy Land!

And the country which formed the patrimony of Israel was devoted to *distinctive worship*. It was occupied by "a kingdom of priests." It was consecrated to "ordinances of divine service." "Its gates were praise." "It was a house of prayer for all people." Cloud followed cloud of incense, oblation reeked after oblation of blood.

* Shakspeare.

They "knew what they worshipped." "In his temple did every one speak of his glory." To enable them to take possession of it as the scite of that fane in which he should be "glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises," the sun stood still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. Still, often "incense was an abomination;" "vain was the oblation;" "it was iniquity, even the solemn meeting;" "their fear was taught by precept of men." Where are the true celebrants of *such* worship? of worship without pause and satiety? It is remarkable that while heaven is described by the similitudes of the ancient Jerusalem, it is noted by the apocalyptical seer that "he saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were the temple of it." It was only fitting that when praise is incessant and eternal, He who is its object and medium should become its sanctuary too,—so that he "inhabits" as well as receives it! "They rest not day and night!" "His servants shall serve him!"

And as Canaan was but the type, the sensible model and imperfect specimen, of all the blessings which are included in "the better country," so is it affirmed, what indeed might be assumed, that it is "*heavenly*." The original word not inaptly expresses the force of our own. The first is derived from an etymon, signifying to excite;* the other from one which expresses height and elevation.† The lofty moves our admiration. And it is frequently used to denote another order of things from any we have known—a state of purer existence and nobler joy. It tells us of that which we cannot learn but on the testimony of Him who is "the Lord from heaven." Our hope is "laid up in heaven." Our inheritance is "reserved in heaven." In heaven is our "better substance." "The house not made with hands is eternal in the heavens." We admit that we cannot unfold its import or seize its strength. It is a term which, however positive in itself,

* Ὀρω. † Heafian, to heave, to raise.

rather expresses our ignorance than overcomes it. All we know is what the contrast teaches—"As is the heavenly, such are they also who are heavenly: and as we *have* borne the image of the earthy, we *shall* also bear the image of the heavenly."

And it furnishes a pleasing illustration of the argument couched in the text, that the patriarchs are particularly revealed to us as having entered into heaven, and as holding in it a most distinguished place. "If they gave commandment concerning their bones," it was that they might express their confidence in the reality of the more glorious region which the place of their sepulchres adumbrated. The "Israelite indeed" thought of "Abraham's bosom:" and our Lord assured his hearers that "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were in the kingdom of God." Thus are they defended on the highest authority; and it is manifested that their hope was no idle dream, but that "the steps of their faith" conducted them surely to the reality of the "better country which is a heavenly."

It may be permitted to us to mark "the blessed hope" which we thus obtain of sharing with them that possession, "since without us they could not be made perfect." What a contrast has every departing saint experienced who has gone forth by death from this inferior, to that transcendent, state. They have only been "absent from the body to be present with the Lord." However "wrought for the self-same thing," however "meetened for this inheritance," however "foreordained unto glory," yet the transition from the extreme of weakness and suffering, from the overwhelming abasement and rending struggle of the mortal strife, into the sudden brightness and perfect rapture of the Vision, and this too in "a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,"—such a transition it is impossible to describe, for the single step appropriates heaven, and the single moment commences eternity! Gaze on the expiring, the glorified, Christian! At one moment seized

by death; the next, free from its grasp forever! At one moment filled with the deep consciousness of various depravity; the next, standing unreprovable and unblameable in the sight of God! At one moment racked by pain and wasted by disease; the next, knitted into the vigour of an eternally-renewing youth! At one moment what all must pity; the next, what all must envy! At one moment surrounded with tears and sighs; the next, with smiles and acclamations! At one moment lamented by mortals; the next, greeted by angels! At one moment gasping in agony and convulsion; the next, pouring forth the melody of a ceaseless song! At one moment the nerveless emaciated hand just raised by attendants; the next, waving a palm of victory, and striking a harp of gold! At one moment the parched lip gently touched with moisture; the next, drinking "the rivers of divine pleasures!" At one moment the darkened chamber accommodated to the shutting sense, and concealing the ignominious form, of death; the next, the subject of such precaution, shining out like a sun in the kingdom of his Father!

Surely, if "the children of the captivity" forgot not their own land, what sensibilities should our present expatriation, and our future return, awaken! "By the river of Babylon, there they sat down, yea, they wept, when they remembered Zion. They hanged their harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." Their right hand had not forgotten its skill to rule the chords, nor had their voices lost the power of inspired song; but rather *should* it be forgotten, and their hand fall lifeless by their side, rather *should* their tongue cleave to the roof of their mouth, than they could forget Jerusalem, than they could cease to prefer Jerusalem above their most valued delight. They could not "sing the Lord's song in a strange land." They felt the cruelty of their exaction who "required mirth" from them in their mournful deso-

lation. And "when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, they were like them who dreamed. Then was their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing." The desert became a "highway" for their trackless but certain course: patriotic instinct led them, and "the way-faring men, though fools, could not err therein:" *age* resigned its infirmities, "weak hands were strengthened, and feeble knees confirmed:" *original incapacity* was overcome, "the eyes of the blind were opened, and the ears of the deaf were unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb sang:" *external nature*, in its grimmest forms, became propitious, "the solitary place was glad for them, the desert blossomed abundantly, the parched ground became a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water:" the *ferocity* of serpents and beasts was subdued, "dragons" left "their habitation," "no lion nor any ravenous beast" crossed their march: *whatever* were their perils, "the ransomed of the Lord returned and came to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads:" and amidst those scenes of holy memory and historic exultation, they "obtained joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing fled away!"*—And should *we* not evince that this world is uncongenial to us, that it is a region through which we only pass, that we are "strangers and sojourners," that we have put on the gear of pilgrims, that we are hastening homeward, that we have already in sight our native land? "The world will love its own"—have we secured its hate? If we "are not of the world," is the demarcation apparent? Should not the moan of the exile mingle with our song? Should not our strain swell more rapturously as we approach the heavenly strand? Earth is but our road, life but our travel, and eternity but our destination! And still as we advance let the lessening objects of sense be more lightly esteemed by us; and as the heavenly country opens on our view, let us speed forward, let us rejoice

* Isaiah, xxxv. chap. passim.

thankfully,—let its music warble from our tongue, and its glory flash from our brow!

III. LET US REMARK THAT PLAN OF ULTIMATE HABITATION WHICH THESE PATRIARCHS WERE TO DISCOVER AND ENJOY, IN THE COUNTRY OF THEIR FOND DESIRE AND EARNEST RESEARCH.

We cannot but shudder at infinite immensity. We may be told of a boundless country, and though "a heavenly," only be confounded and dismayed. Our feebleness, which has its "foundation in the dust," needs a more minute and local settlement. The emigrant is disheartened by the vastitude of the country which he enters, uncertain whither to proceed, and where to stop. And after the same manner, a fixed habitation is required by the departed spirit, seeking rest and refuge in eternity. In the thought of that eternity, all its powers, its very self, are lost. It desires, as it strives to conceive of the length and breadth of even the heavenly country, a particular allocation. And when it is separated from the present sphere, an all-directing voice shall speak to it, "Come up hither;" nor shall it wilder a forsaken and homeless thing, but "enter through the gate into the city." Such a residence has every spirit found, "knowing God, or rather known of him:" "He has prepared a city," and the Saviour has endeared it still more by impressing on it characters still more tender,—"In my *Father's house* are many mansions: *if* it were *not so, I would have told you.* I go to *prepare a place for you.*" The man who would refine away the materialism of the celestial world has yet to learn the nature of the human mind, must retract all belief in the properties of that Incarnate Person whose peculiarity consists in its relation to space, distracts the attention with what is inconceivable by being indefinite, and leaves to himself and others an abstraction cold as the moon-beam, and as fickle too.

There *is* a city, "the Heavenly Jerusalem!" "God has

devised means that his banished ones be not expelled from him." Long since the first pilgrimage commenced. Tribe after tribe has gone forth from the house of bondage. Column has pressed upon column through the wilderness. Millions have still before them the struggle of the outset; millions are toiling onward among the briars and thorns of the way; millions have accomplished the journey, and are "singing in the height of Zion." "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." And when we examine the reasons, why such a figure is employed, why this is called a *city*, two very obvious remarks suggest themselves.

1. Heaven is a *community*. For the civic is a corporate state of society, in which equal rights are enjoyed and equal obligations are imposed. It presumes the strictest agreement and fellowship. The cities of Israel were still more social than ordinary ones can be. They were allotted to kindreds and families. Each citizen could point to his mural inheritance, and dwelt among his own people.

Even now the Christian is one with his "brethren that are in the world:" he is one with "the whole family in heaven and earth:" he is "no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." And his "name is in the book of life," and "his citizenship is in heaven," and he has "the earnest of his inheritance." "The church of the first-born" wait for their younger brethren, until all shall be "made perfect in one!"

Excellence of the highest order just shews itself among us to disappear. It is as though the bloom of Paradise were on it, and contact with earth would defile it. Whither does it find its way? What collects the beautiful exhalation? How much holy influence is withdrawn! How many precious examples set in our horizon! The sun goes down while it is yet noon! The jewels are only exhibited while the hand is making them up to set them in

the crown which fadeth not away! Treasure after treasure is detached, pillar upon pillar falls! "The godly man ceaseth, the faithful fail from among the children of men." And often the preparations seem too elaborate for the race, the munitions of war too mighty for the victory. What education has been received, and scarcely has a lesson been inculcated in return! What presage has been signalized to perish unredeemed! But not a fragment has been lost. All is stored up in heaven. Worth and goodness feel its attraction, and tend to it as their centre. They "reach forth unto those things which are before," and "seek those things which are above." They there can find a congenial atmosphere, and acquire a native growth. Deeply are we impoverished by the loss; but death is their gain, and the acquisition of a region which they were designed to adorn, and fitted to enrich. True greatness and virtue are transplanted from our waste into that soil. The fruits of holiness are deposited in that garner. From the first saint who passed thither, until him who shall be the last, that city has kept a "feast of ingathering." Hourly, momentarily, have its inhabitants multiplied. One after another has been joined to them. The pious have found the still more devout, the zealous the still more fervent. They who sowed, and those who reaped, rejoice together. "Its gates are not shut at all by day, and there is no night there." From the four winds are accessions constantly rendering it more wealthy and blessed. Can it be a little thing to "walk with the nations of the saved?" Can it be,—to commune with "faithful Abraham," to see "the end of the Lord" in Job, to listen to "the sweet singer of Israel," to "hail the mother of our Lord" and learn from her what she "pondered in her heart," to sympathize with the emotions of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and to "fall on Paul's neck," not weeping that we "shall see his face no more," but rejoicing that he has now "received us forever?"

A thousand avenues open from earth into heaven, "thither the tribes go up" for whom "God has prepared this city," and soon that assemblage shall be complete. Then what was taken away shall be restored; and the high, sweet, qualities which escaped from this unpropitious clime, shall obtain the favour they deserve, and take the station to which they are entitled. Ah, that is "the holy city, New Jerusalem," and the residence of the holy!

And not only is it the ultimate abode and metropolis of all the faithful, the "Zion" which collects and embraces all "her precious sons," but there they exist in the most entire agreement of love. Consentaneous is every thought and temper. With an endless modification of character, and as endless a diversity of reward, no possible interruption can arise to their harmony. The concord is absolute. The bond of perfectness excludes the most distant encroachment, or most subtle insinuation, of envy, suspicion, and distrust. Not only is hate unknown, but every seed is destroyed from which it could spring. The misconstructions of motive, the dissensions of opinion, the alienations of habit, which sever the righteous here, will be replaced by generous confidence, unerring sentiment, and inseparable union. There no forbearance can be exercised, nor forgiveness exchanged. No wall of partition will divide, no contrariety of disposition repel. Fellowships of mind and sympathy will exist, now foretasted by few, and comprehended by none. There thought will flow into thought, and feeling blend with feeling. The "city is compact together." "Peace is within its walls, and prosperity within its palaces."

2. Heaven is an *enduring place.* With a city we connect what is massive in foundation and structure. The emporium of government, and the mart of trade, it arises in strength. It seeks to fortify itself against time as well as hostility. Architecture boasts its solid grandeur, and power entrenches itself in its sure defence. The village

may be rapidly overthrown or deserted, but the towered state and might of the city look down scornfully upon the threatened attack, nor heed the stream of ages more than the river which skirts its walls, and reflects its pinnacles. Yet where are those things of a vaunted eternity? Where are the cities of Nimrod, Cecrops, Nebuchadnezzar, and even Augustus? Vanished like a mountain-mist, past like a watch in the night! But *our* city is not built on the sands of earth, the waves of time,—it is deep-based in the rock of eternity! "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." As if to express its durability, we are informed that it has "twelve foundations." The crash of worlds would spend itself without marring a trace of its beauty, or shaking a stone of its building.

Sometimes, indeed, the cities of the earth have survived their living populations. They have stood uninhabited like Thebes, or been scathed as Pompeii into a city of the dead. But it is the ordinary law that "the mourners should go about the streets." It is not only from the "gate" of a Nain that "a dead man is carried out." However the piles of earth defy the shock and waste of ages, man "is of few days." His own works deride his little span of life. But "the city which God has prepared," is as imperishable in its inhabitants as its materials. Its pearl, its jasper, its pure gold, are only immortal to frame the abode of immortals. No cry of death is in any of its dwellings. No funeral darkens along any of its ways. No sepulchre of the holiest relics gleams among the everlasting hills. "Violence is not heard in the land." "There is no more death." It is destroyed and obliterated. Its last ensign has disappeared. Its very name has perished. "It is swallowed up in victory."

And high is our dignity, and triumphant should be our joy, if "grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our

bondage." Yonder is our city-home! We carry our muniments in our bosom. In its archives, our names are enrolled. We are "citizens of no mean city." As its battlements rest against the sky, what hands wave from them, what anthems float over them, to quicken our activity, and greet our approach! "We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks!" Certain is our present claim: but it awaits the grandest avowal. And He who is "our forerunner" will ratify the investiture, and "write upon us the name of the city of our God." Inaugurated on "the set thrones" of that royal, presenting the censers "filled with odours" of that templar, city,—surveying, on the one hand, its wealth, its magnificence, its robes and crowns, its every inhabitant a king,—encircled by the holy memorials, on the other, the crystal laver, the golden altar, the ark of the testament, the Lamb of the sacrifice, each worshipper a priest, ... ah! how may we look down upon the proudest honours and richest treasures of the noblest city which ever oppressed earth with its foundations, or emulated heaven with its summits!

And can we be satisfied with any other portion? Were the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them, now shown and proffered to you, must you not "desire a better country?" It is well that we "*learn* to be content;" a necessary lesson and an arduous attainment. But this world contains not an element of *satisfaction*. Our soul finds within all its breadth, no peace nor rest. "It knoweth us not." We are but journeying through it. Thankful for a path, whether rugged or smooth, we still pursue our way. We would be benefactors as we press forward, and our invitation is to all, "Come with us and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Could we but make them feel the urgency and grandeur of our enterprise! Could we but induce them to abandon this place devoted to vanity and doom! Shine out, O city

of our God! Attract their eyes, captivate their hearts, who now "mind earthly things!"

For you, dear Christians, it only remains that you keep your fixed resolve, and hasten toward the land which God has promised, and the city which he has prepared. Barter not your pilgrim's staff for a monarch's sceptre! Put not off your sandals, though potentates would stoop to anoint your feet! Be yourselves, and their wealth will be no bribe, and their power no temptation. Spurn their dalliances! Brave their frowns! Your diadems will blaze forth when "kings are bound with chains, and nobles with fetters of iron!"

Strangers here, a stranger conflict will soon demand your faith and patience. The last step of pilgrimage is the most severe. It is still left for you to die. The summons of this mortality resounds; and falls on many a timid ear, chill and startling as that of old, "Go over Jordan." Cold and dark is the wave we must pass. Whether we cross it at the most shallow ford or the most eddying depth, whether at its narrowest or broadest reach, it yet is to be past. But lo! the heavenly country and the holy city rise before you! Close they rise upon the other margin! They mirror themselves on the stream! Sometimes as it is ruffled, the reflected image is broken, but as frequently it restores itself; and assures us that the imperfect view should be ascribed to the agitation of the medium, while the Reality exists in its unwavering majesty, and even overhangs the waters which waft us thither!—Amen.

SERMON X.

DEISM NO REFUGE FROM JUDGMENT.

ROMANS iii. 6.

FOR THEN HOW SHALL GOD JUDGE THE WORLD?

THE abruptness of this inquiry sufficiently proves that the fact, which is the subject of it, is established beyond dispute. It is adduced as an essential and primary truth. Other points might require adjustment and defence; but this is too plain an axiom, too sure an event, to admit of argumentation. It is made a standard of appeal; and in all such cases the appeal must be allowed, on every side, to be valid and unexceptionable. The inspired writer, therefore, intended that there was nothing more obvious than the appointment, more general than the admission, more indispensable than the necessity, of the Final Judgment.

Had occasion existed for discussion, had there been need of reasoning, Paul would have exhibited his capacity to undertake either, or his masterdom of both. Whatever he most cursorily touches, he arrays in light. He seems to dismiss each topic exhausted, until he renews it. He loves the sublimely terrible. If there be one chord more awfully sonorous than another, it is that he strikes. On the introduction, for instance, of this particular theme, he is wont to rise into his loftiest majesty of sentiment and expression. Sometimes, in a tone of clear dispassionate statement, he affirms it to be "a righteous thing with God

to recompense tribulation." Standing at the bar of Felix, he "reasoned of" it, poured out in its vindication all the strength and opulence of his mind; and though his well-directed proofs are not recorded, they made the royal culprit "tremble." It was an intellectual sway ennobled with a moral triumph. Summoned to account for his opinions before the high court of Areopagus,—encircled by the lights and ornaments of Grecian jurisprudence, eloquence, and logic,—raised as in mid-air, while temple and statue gleamed beautifully around him,—he proceeded by a cautious, and apparently incidental, train of remarks, into a powerful series of reasonings; reminds that judicature of another tribunal; by a rapid transition passes from that pending investigation to a more solemn scrutiny; and cites these functionaries, the very impersonations of an awful justice, before a Dreader Judge. Was ever human mind so susceptible of its impression, and capable of its description? His spirit seemed clothed with its pomp, and resonant of its trumpet. He only failed when the thought and language of creatures must necessarily fail. Could mortal power have embraced the realities of that August Transaction, his was the imagination to give them a terrific vividness, his was the energy to set them forth with a faithful certitude. But a single turn of interrogation better serves his purpose now. It carries conviction, and compels assent. Tolerating no reply, brooking no suspense,—the truth, the justice, of the demand instantaneously, intuitively, flashes upon us! "How, then, shall God judge the world?" is, in other words, to say, that it is a universal impression, an undeniable truth, an inevitable conclusion, that God *will*, and even *must*, judge the world!

It is the common device of infidelity to rest the truth of such *judgment* upon the question of a particular *revelation*. It attacks the Gospel: now this Gospel presumes the fact at issue: and the attack is supposed, if successful in the first case, to be invincibly so in the last. It is not

doubted by these adversaries, but that both must fall together. Let but Christianity be disproved, and they hesitate not to affirm that the whole theory of a judgment is subverted. They covert, they hope to make a deadly, thrust. But they sophisticate the matter. They take for granted that this doctrine is a *distinctive* feature of the Christian system. They hope to find this assumption convenient, and the argument based upon it availing. But assumption cannot be more false, nor argument more bootless. The religion of the Saviour pre-supposes the *judgment*, but does not constitute its ground: it explains its nature, but does not give it existence. It imparts to the sinner hope and solace, amidst his conjecture of its horror, and his foreboding of its doom. But reject it, repeal it! Still man is not released from duty, nor exempted from retribution. These are elements of a moral condition, which are primordial to all specific dispensation of divine government. These may be discerned among the original characteristics which attach themselves to our nature itself. Rule, surely, precedes mercy—and penalty, forgiveness. The mercy and the forgiveness cannot be the reason of the rule, or the cause of the penalty. If criminals be arraigned, if an amnesty be declared to all who will accept it, how absurd would it be to ascribe to the amnesty the previous arraignment! That manifestly is something antecedent and independent: and though clemency had not interposed, still would the law have remained the same, and would still require for its support an administrative and executory power.

So that we are willing to meet the sceptic on his own ground. You need not be a Christian, to be a probationer for "eternal judgment." You do not, on the refusal of any claims purporting to be those of a divine revelation, cease to be accountable, or throw aside the candidateship for reward and punishment. This arises out of an earlier relation, it is a predicament of moral being. You cannot,

however you deal with any revealed pretention, make the last day a pendant to it: you cannot, in any shipwreck of faith, engulph this consequent of the simplest admission of a first Cause: prostrate, as you may, the pillar of inspired truth, and establish the cheat of the inspired pages, you cannot rend down the judgment which shall be set, nor blot out the books which shall be opened. If you destroy all that intervenes between you and that last great day, that day must break. Had our God not come at any time, had he never interrupted the silence of the ages, he will then, "come, and not keep silence." This is due to the constitution of things. Whatever else may be controverted and escaped, this is alike infallible and inevitable!

We must attempt, therefore, to place it on grounds unconditional of our "professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ."

I. THE MOST CORRECT IDEAS WE CAN ENTERTAIN OF THE DEITY REQUIRE THAT THERE SHOULD BE A JUDGMENT.

Holy Scripture does not take to itself the honour of discovering that there is a God. It distinctly allows that the evidence of this fact is in the works of his hands. It would not be in the power of any book to furnish it. The first notion, that there is a Maker, must be suggested by the things he has made. The rational creature who infers not "the invisible things of God" from the operations of his power, intelligence, and benignity, is "without excuse." "These may be clearly seen." But it may be asked, is it only "the fool who hath said in his heart that there is no God?" Were not the ancient sages also ignorant? We must answer this to the shame of their base artifice: "When," or although, "they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." The information which their perceptions could derive from the vast fabric of earth and sky had once sufficed to convince them. "That which might be known of God was manifest

in them, for God had shewed it unto them." The knowledge was lost when they wilfully blinded others, and in some degree became the dupes of their own duplicity. But this was a moral retribution,—fitting punishment following voluntary guilt,—"they changed the truth of God into a lie . . . they did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge." Whatever was the corrupting influence of their systems, each individual gazed forth on the same wondrous premises, and might have wrought out for himself the same necessary conclusion.

Strength and skill are the two most early impressions induced by a survey of Creation. The greatness of the act is unquestionable. The subservience of that act to all the wants and habitudes of living beings is demonstrative. Such a combination of properties supposes an active benevolence, directing all to purposes of happiness and utility. But the impression of *justice* is not spontaneously obtained. The course is not so much of observation as reflection. We proceed with a more circumspect examination. We are compelled to admix different ideas, to compare remote phenomena, and having reasoned, to pronounce our deliberations. Still there are reasonings by no means abstruse, founded upon what we see around us and feel within us, which cannot fail to conduct to the assurance that there is "a God who judgeth in the earth."

We cannot regard mankind with any closeness of investigation without finding that sentiments of duty, and principles of conscience, actuate them. Hoodwinked as their apprehensions, debased as their standards, of religion may be, still they have universally exhibited a religious bias and capacity. "Their thoughts have accused or excused one another." "They knew the judgment of God." "They are a law unto themselves." None should be more ready to embrace such statements than the impugners of revelation; and none, when such statements are found convenient, do lay greater weight upon them. For it is

from the sufficiency of reason and the moral sense, they hope to invalidate the authority, by showing the superfluousness, of any but natural religion. Enough, they tell us, is already taught: the lessons are plain to every eye, and the dictates to every ear! They ask no volume but that of nature, and wish no interpreter but that of man! Creation is their temple, and they worship at the altar of no "unknown God!" Such are our common data,—but how are they to be pursued? We differently account for them; but as to their character and existence we have no dispute. Have all nations a fear of disobeying a higher power? Have they a dread of punishment? Resort they to means of expiation? Then this is the collective suffrage of the species. It proclaims, that where there is guilt, there is justice; that the sinner awaits the execution of a sentence; that there is a universal assent to the doctrine of a judgment,—our only present question, since the time, order, and manner cannot affect its equity or reality!

As we can trace a general uniformity in the divine procedure, an analogy between the various acts of the Great Agent of all, so we find that however interrupted, the original plan is speedily restored. The deviation is partial and transient, and the disturbed machinery reverts to its more precise and regular movements. An infinite care is extended towards the physical world. The cloud-rack disparts and the bright calm heaven glows above us; the chafed ocean rocks itself to rest. If, therefore, this love of order, and perseverance of arrangement, govern the realms of matter, an equal vigilance will pervade the dominion of mind. But mind is susceptible of certain disorder, and it may present to the Allseeing eye a scene of phrenzy and misrule. Should no cognizance be taken of this violation inflicted on the more precious harmonies of spiritual existence? Mechanical power is competent in the one case, for it is unconscious matter on which it operates; but moral nature is the subject of ascertained

law and proper disposition,—it must not be therefore coerced but regulated. It may persist in this wrong, its will may lead it forward in a succession of guilty conduct, and now what is left even to the Supreme but to punish? What other check but punishment can be supposed? He who controls the objects of sense, cannot be insufficient or indifferent to control, agreeably to its own laws, that mysterious essence which constitutes all the value and all the character of man, whom He has set over the works of his hands! The question is, whether the God who upholds each atom, and enforces each law, of the universe, will suffer the human spirit all its waywardness of folly and crime without restriction,—that is, with indulgence and impunity?

We are conscious, whatever may be our present state of vitiation,—(a state we do not ask our opponents to allow, but a belief in which we feel perfectly to comport with the ensuing averment,)—we are conscious of being differently affected by different kinds of conduct. It will be impossible to pourtray certain excellence or vice without exciting in the spectator, esteem or disgust. The most debased will not be wholly unimpressed. Something of an original taste survives in all, and it is scarcely capable of an entire perversion. Reason, in every distinctive acceptation, must have perished, if *it* be extinguished. Unbending integrity, melting charity, meek simplicity, high-souled independence,—the rescue of innocence, the resistance of oppression,—these awe or charm, raise our admiration or inspire our love. It is a law almost irrepressible. Bodily distortion and deformity do not more certainly move within us unpleasant feelings, than moral incongruities jar and pain. How is it that these forms of virtue and vice produce such concurrent effects? How may we explain it, that men have at all times united in these sentiments? What poet could ever make vile and cruel passion agreeable; and what painter could ever win,

for the figure of infamy, our complacent emotion? The triumph of these masters might be proudly successful,—their spell might soften, their composition might relieve,—but the themes themselves could only displease. Say, that this is an essential law of mind,—say, that it is dictated by a fixed constitution of things,—say, that it is an acknowledgment of a proportion and scale as true in morals, as a standard of what is straight and crooked is in physics,—what is such *law*, such *constitution*, such *proportion* and *scale?* It must be the Divine will,—its sympathy or aversion,—impressing itself on each mind, and reflecting itself from the general system. You shrink from evil, you are attracted by good, because your Creator has so constituted you to be impressed. But then we cannot evade the inference, that He must mark his displeasure, that He must be consistent with these declarations of his purpose; and that, since He loves good and hates evil infinitely more than we can do, He must call them to account who thwart and disobey these primary perceptions. He cannot impel us in one way, and proceed himself in the contrary!

All the preceding statements presume a rectitude in the Deity. Is his government stretched over mind? Has he made virtue beautiful? Then he "respects no man's person," then he elicits the qualities of conduct, "he looketh upon the heart," "by him actions are weighed." He must entertain an essential disposition to execute righteousness in approving or condemning: and will make it plain to others, to all rational beings, that he is not only invariable in this purpose, but that this purpose is suggested by an equal invariableness of nature.

And surely our adversaries will not refuse us the right to ascribe to the Supreme, all known and conceivable excellence. Whence, but from this "eternal Power and Godhead," can the capacity to discriminate excellence be derived? Whence, but from this source, can excellence

itself have emanated? But we see it only in distinct, and often broken portions; and not in its perfection of symmetry and fulness. And as virtuous greatness cannot consist without justice, so we must cause this attribute to inhere in every thought and representation of the Deity, the denial of which to a creature, leaves him confessedly the bane and disgrace of his kind. And the proof, that if God be infinite in *any* attribute he must be in *all*, is irrefragable; he is therefore just in a degree and to an extent worthy of Him who "governs the nations upon the earth."

Indeed His justice is necessary to his less disputed perfections. Is he wise? then the plan of his wisdom must not be frustrated. Is he powerful? then the temerity which trifles with it, and the hardihood which scoffs at it, must be overthrown. Is he good? then his beneficence must not be turned aside from the objects to whom it is directed, nor be converted into a weapon against himself. Justice is but the perseverance of his wisdom, the determination of his power, and the victory of his love. It is the only security of his purpose, protection of his character, and guardianship of his creation.

But more will be granted by the intelligent Deist. He will clothe the God, whom he confesses, with certain relations. That God is a Father: and the poet of nature sang a truth, "We are his offspring." Requires that family no discipline? Shall no difference be made between the obedient and the disobedient children? That God is a Governor: for it is presupposed by the argument that such a law is now, and always has been, extant, as to make a dogmatic revelation unnecessary. Has that law no sanctions? is there no honour, no self-respect, which obliges the lawgiver to enforce them?

The great rudiments of justice are widely and deeply engraven on the present system: and the very exceptions to the universal rule, the very delays of the universal

administration, only render the doctrine more credible, the fact more urgent, that there shall be a Judgment, in which man will receive "according to the things done in the body." Invest the First of beings with one *moral* quality,—the boast of this species of scepticism,—and not only cannot this event be disproved, but all our reasonings on that one quality render it plausible, and leave it imperative!

II. The Dignity of human intellect and capacity enforces it.

Man is endowed with a capability of knowing different things, of distinguishing their properties, and of choosing between their claims. He obeys no impact like the material body, nor follows the instinct of the simple animal: he prefers, he refuses, he outstrips his fellow, he improves on himself. Who can limit his power? What can stop his progress? The elements are his tributaries. He can change their forms, and invent new uses for them. He yokes the winds, and lightning stays for his experiment. And he may be, as yet, only in the infancy of his energies, and but at the threshold of discoveries which no fancy can paint. What realms may open for his invasion, and yield to his sovereignty!

But why was he made? To eat, and drink, and sleep? To care only for himself? To build houses, and ply his different arts? While the majority evince so feeble an activity of intellect, were they created to aggrandize by contrast, what the few master-spirits have done, and what the mind they represent can always achieve? We cannot but notice the vanity of his common pursuits, and their disparity to his character. None can exceed our estimate of his *faculties;* but the fact is as certain, as it is mournful, that they are strangely degraded. And when we look upon "the vain show" in which he acts his part, and "the pride of life," with its gewgaw pageantry and tinsel pomp,—when from palaces we descend to the menial

drudge, his hapless lot and bitter privation,—we demand, is this the *nature* of which we vaunt? is this the creature whose brow looks up to heaven, and whose spirit mingles with divinity? What does man better than the thousand tribes which fill the air, roam the earth, and cleave the flood? The hue of Paradise may vein the clod,—there may lie hidden in the spirit the imperfect sinew, and callow down, of wings which could dispread themselves for an immortal flight. The inquiry relates to what is; and all must admit that human nature is the subject of a lamentable perversion.

And that this idea of *perversion* may be duly considered, we should remember that we can apply it to none other creature within this visible economy. When we think of the sun, we never suppose that it had a nobler use; the stars keep their orbits and travel their rounds; spring raises nature from the grave of the year; and the ordinances of heaven are established. Still "all is very good;" and if "subject to vanity," it is the folly to which it ministers, and not any taint upon itself. It may be "made to serve with our iniquities," but itself basks in the smile continually which erst glanced on it. Man only has abused his nature, and corrupted his way. He is the solitary failure! His powers give magnitude to his guilt and his perniciousness. He has fallen, and dragged down the pillars of earth in his fall.

Of all terrestrial creatures he is the only *religious* one. The scenes around him, and the feelings within him, allow him no alternative. The Deist confirms this impression, and speaks of a natural religion, suitable for man and common to him. And if man be the only religious creature, he is the only creature who can understand religion. You may, by hope and fear, arouse the brute, you may teach it to interpret your looks and tones; but a producing cause, a code of fitness, a spirituality of retribution, surpass any capacity it has to understand.

But why was man thus enabled to appreciate ideas of moral accountability? Is it not a distinction of his being? Must it not denote the will of his Maker? Hence arises the necessity of a judgment. For how great a waste of intellect and moral feeling is included in sin! What a depravation of heart is supposed in voluntary irreligion! What is their guilt who throw off an allegiance which they only can approve! For what have they to answer! And can He, whose purpose these endowments express, suffer all this perversion without inquisition and rebuke? Can He behold himself mocked in his plan, and robbed of his glory, without one frown of his disapprobation? Can scepticism impute to its God a leniency, or rather a supineness, like this? The doctrine of final causes would, under such argument, be an empty theory; design there could be none; law must be repealed; government might break its sceptre; for man, constituted religious, susceptible of its influence, and intelligent of its nature, jeers its supposition, spurns its authority, withholds its service,—while his God, who required it, and should have received its homage, cares not to notice the neglect, nor to resent the indignity!

III. THE PARTIALLY DEVELOPED CHARACTER, AND THE MIXED NATURE, OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM, INTIMATE THAT THERE SHALL BE A JUDGMENT.

It would be difficult for any *reasoning* creature to conclude that the *present* was a *final* state. There is so much of life past in infancy and demanded for education,—the period of the longest is so brief, and that of each so uncertain,—toil consumes so large a part, while refreshment from toil one scarcely less,—such buddings of genius are prematurely blighted, and mind often retains such freedom and triumph amidst the dissolution of the body,—that every thing seems to intimate another scene of existence, in which the highest aims and employments of the soul, in its earthly abode, may be resumed. Were this

world all, were all our mortal life, how melancholy would be the wreck of its abortive enterprises. Sensuality and gain would best agree with its littleness; and where men attempted better things, we should be summoned to deplore the distorted growth of intellect, the outspread wing of the soul beating against the bars of its cage.—And if a *reasoning* creature would infer that only an incipient character belonged to the present state, the inference would still more readily recur to him who exercised *moral reflection.* How confused are those arrangements which should distinctively belong to virtue and vice! Does not crime frequently succeed? Is not excellence depressed? Though enough exists to satisfy us that there is a plan and rule of justice, is there not equal proof that this plan and rule are never perfectly enforced? If they were fully carried out, would not the effect be so great that society would generally invert itself? "The prosperity of the wicked" has awakened the most masculine minds to wonder, and the most holy hearts to mourn.

The view which best and alone relieves this strange position of human affairs, is that which impresses a *probationary* character on the present state. Our Maker will now "prove what is in our heart." It is a necessary condition of such a discipline, that wickedness shall be left to itself. Therefore it stalks so giantly, and uprears its towering front. Misery is entailed by its course, and its success is founded upon suffering. Though "the evil bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous," they seek their extermination. The meekness, the forbearance, the rectitude of the pious are thus established; there is a constant scrutiny of their pretensions, and ordeal of their excellencies. This mixed state must continue, unless there be a constant interposition to repair and adjust it; but then there could be no liberty, no opportunity given for the collision of rival principles, and

the reaction of opposite characters. It arises out of moral agency, and is inseparable from moral probation. The consequence is, that "many are purified and tried; but that the wicked do wickedly." There are "the tears of the oppressed, and on the side of their oppressors there is power."

If such a condition of things be found under the dominion of the Just One, whose "eyes behold the things which are equal," it cannot be the *whole* of that system which he administers: if its partial character be intended for the regimen of a probation, then it must point forward to some period and mode of *decision*. But this is the very *judgment* which we affirm, necessary to resolve all temporary perplexities, and to balance all former derangements.

Nor let it be objected to, that the delay is long: it would be as reasonable to complain of the succession of mankind. All are to be treated alike: and the system must endure with the species. It proves not that "the Lord hath forsaken the earth." It warrants not the wicked to "contemn God, or to say in his heart, Thou wilt not require it." "Sentence" may be promulgated "against an evil work," though it is not "executed speedily." There can be no need of any addition to the acts and resources of his government. There is no implication and ground of suspicion that any thing dubious waits to be explained, any thing feeble to be enforced, any thing vague to be defined. The patience of this government may rather augur its efficiency. It is too majestic to be provoked, too strong to be tempted from its fixed arrangements. Its forbearance reveals its dignity. God ceases not to reign when he refuses to strike. If the objection ever were powerful, it is hourly diminishing. We, who are Christians, tell our antagonists that the end is at hand. Judgment lingereth not. The retribution, which has an eternity in which to expand, wants not to

precipitate its measures. It will be sufficiently early. None will complain that it was too tardy then. Let not foolish man try to urge it on. Would ye taunt it into haste? Such a God as the opponent allows, can suffer this delay without derogation: nor let him turn from us when we declare from the Bible that *our* God "knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

These are facts which the Deist observes,—how can he escape, admitting as he does the existence of a Deity, the pressure of the conclusion that he must judge his creatures?

IV. THE TENDENCIES OF CONDUCT IN THE PRESENT STATE WILL GREATLY INCREASE THE PROBABILITY OF A JUDGMENT.

Particular consequences are perceived by all to attend particular acts. We are happy or miserable according to the nature of those acts. Exultation in crime is nearly impossible. It is true that men may exult in some success which crime has accomplished, but there are few who would not avoid the crime itself. Theft was necessary to the acquisition, murder to the revenge; but the means are perhaps subjects of complacency to none. Shame, misgiving, and remorse, fill the guilty heart. Something more than the fear of punishment torments,—it is the hideous aspect of the deed. "Look on it again, they dare not."—Justice, on the other hand, integrity, temperance, kindness, impart to the mind a cheerfulness, a peace, a glow of satisfaction, which no guilty excesses bring. It is the consciousness of being right. But it is more, it is the influence of that consciousness on an order of natural sensibilities, as adapted to receive pleasure from it, as the eye from light, and the ear from music. It is not the loud plaudit which bids us rejoice: it is the internal welling up of a native spring.*

* This sentiment is well illustrated by Socrates, in his dialogue with Hippias:—"Αγραφους δε τινας οισθα, εφη, νομους; Τους γ' εν πασῃ, εφη, χωρα κατα ταυτα νομιζομενους. Εχοις αν ουν ειπειν, εφη,

And we may commonly discern that there is connection between sin and suffering besides that of the self-upbraiding mind. Fraud overreaches, violence recoils on, itself. One false step induces a second, and the entire life stumbles from it. This is the principle of distributive justice,—we receive according to our works. The most distant results are held by the attachment of some most unconsidered and early act. "Justice commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice to our own lips." In the abandonment of an evil course, we cannot promise ourselves a reversal of its former consequences. The retribution is often explicable from the nature of things, —which is only another mode of saying, from the counsel of the divine will operating in so sure a way that it may be constantly anticipated, and made a ground of confident persuasion. But there is also much to show, if not a more direct agency on the part of God, a more immediate interference. Who can shake from him the belief that He has so acted and may so act?

We require not to be reminded that this argument may, at first sight, appear conflicting with our purpose. "If even now virtue is its own reward, and sin educes its own punishment,—if this system of moral tendencies be now operative,—how can another adjudication be made to seem necessary? You have proved too much." Our answer is of two kinds. The *first* respects the possibility of these consequences being defeated, and these tenden-

ὁτι οι ανθρωποι αυτους εθεντο; Και πως αν, εφη, οἰχε ουτε συνελθειν απαντες δυνηθειεν, ουτε ομοφωνοι εισι; Τινας ουν, εφη, νομιζεις, τεθεικεναι τους νομους τουτους; Εγω μεν, εφη, θεους οιμαι τους νομους τουτους τοις ανθρωποις θειναι." "Knowest thou not that there are certain laws which are unwritten?" He answered, "You allude to those which are every where in force." "But you do not maintain that all men agreed to constitute them?" "Surely not, for mankind could not meet on one spot, or communicate by one language." "How then were these universal laws founded?" "I cannot but conclude that this was the work of the Gods."—XENOPHON. MEMORABILIA. Chap. 4.

cies warped, by particular circumstances. The audacious sinner becomes, by as *certain a law* of sin as that which binds up misery with it, *infatuated* and *hardened.* His "judgment is fled to brutish beasts." The very Mercy which makes it a "bitter thing" is survived. He is "past feeling." He ceases to know the proper anguish of shame and remorse as he increases the number and the enormity of his offences. And has he his desert? The self-inflicted punishment has long since failed. In its suspension is there no voice which announces that the earlier pain attendant upon sin was the preintimation of a deeper and more poignant despair, when it can no longer blind the mind and sear the conscience? that it was the first stirring of "the worm which never dies," afterwards chilled into torpor by the sinner's self-neglect and scorn of all remonstrance from without and within, but to warm itself into activity and fury, where nothing can loosen its hold or soothe its bite?—And the systems of superstition which abound in our world give not a chance to those punishments which depend upon the reproof of the mind. Licentiousness raises no blush of shame, for it enters into the orgies of some worship; the mother feels a satisfaction in infanticide, because, whatever the pang, a superior power is supposed to ordain the sacrifice; and the child applies the brand to the funeral pile, on which his living mother lies, with all the strength of filial piety. Other sentiments fill the heart, and turn aside the current of its best emotions.—But there is a *second* vindication of our argument. The traces of justice, or of that which deals with every thing and relation as it is, are not invariably apparent because narrowed and impeded by sin. And that probationary character, which we have endeavoured to prove belongs to the present state, could not be sustained, if justice were uniform and instantaneous in its exercise. For virtue would then at once claim its reward, without any necessity for the faith which now relies upon

a promise of the future, or for the patience which now meekly awaits it. And then, too, the transgressor would be struck down by the curse, without a power to accumulate his guilt, or a hope of repenting it. There is a sufficiency of evidence to prove that God is manifestly just, and to protect the inference that he must be so when the manifestation is withheld; and both cases combine to show that it is a reasonable expectation, and an absolute dilemma, that he shall "judge the world in righteousness."

And since man is now capable of forming these sentiments, and cherishing these feelings, can they be simply related to the passing life? Do they abruptly expire at death? Is their possessor treated with no distinction above the brute? Are they the decorations and riches of a vessel to be shivered by a blow?

V. THE VISITATIONS OF CALAMITY, PUBLIC AND PERSONAL, CONTRIBUTE MUCH ILLUSTRATIVE EVIDENCE TO THE FACT.

Phenomena have, indubitably, occurred more than difficult to reconcile with the innocence of man, or the indifference of his Creator toward his demerits. We contend not for their judicial character in any invidious sense, and assure the infidel that our Bible pointedly condemns any such interpretation. If a man be born blind, it reminds us that there is no proof that he has particularly and enormously "sinned, nor his parents:"* if a tower fall on a company of persons, or a tyrant ruthlessly massacre those who are engaged in the very act of religious worship, it warns us not to suspect that they "were sinners above all men," but to keep in mind the certainty, if impenitent, of a more tremendous perdition.† We invite not the Infidel to give credit to those prodigies of horror which we, upon the assertion of our bible, believe. He may deny—whatever profane history shall allege, however awe-struck nature shall corroborate—that Sodom

* John ix. 3. † Luke xiii. 1, &c.

and Gomorrha were destroyed with signal vengeance, and tread the strand of Asphaltites, as of the fairest lake which mountains embosom and lilies skirt. He may deny that Euphrates and Tigris wash ruins of any fearful import and prophetic ban; and listen unimpressed to their murmuring streams. He may deny that any supernatural power has plucked the Edomite from his rock, and bid the denationalized Hebrew wander over the earth. He may deny that ever one surge of wrath swept around our globe, and calmly survey its convulsed stratification, confusedly heaped and capriciously dislocated, as he would the veins of some columned marble. He may dissociate from every catastrophe, all moral liability and all penal pursuance. But still there have been vast and manifold natural evils. The storm, the flood, the volcano entombing cities, the earthquake swallowing alive the flying multitude, the pestilence withering nations in its blast, are forms of confessed evil, whatever be their relative cause. But they are strictly *just*. They leave no impeachment on the divine government. Yet how are they just? If they who have suffered were thus dealt with, what millions have escaped? Is there not a presumption here that these calamities are but specimens and omens of a universal judgment,—of the *quick* and *dead?* It may be easy for philosophers in their halls of science and museums of research, to speak of these visitations as following a physical order, and resolvable into a material law. Phlegmatically, they may tell that thus atmospheres are ventilated; and that fires, pent up in central forges, thus scatter their ashes and blow their flames. But the human mind will feel that there is a notice taken by them of sin, and will deprecate of heaven their occurrence. We are wholly at the sport of the elemental war, and our spirits are troubled that something more is meant than nature's momentary start and disturbance in the adjustment of itself.—And the *partiality* of these effects cannot

be pleaded in reproof of our argument. Whatever might be the equipoise between those who are implicated and exempted,—though "two men should be in one bed, and the one be taken and the other not;" though "two women should be grinding together, and the one be taken and the other left;" though "two men should be in the field, and the one be taken and the other left;" yet this equal division proves an unequal treatment. And, therefore, we conclude that there is a prospective arrangement which shall explain the reason of what now seems severe, and shall attach a universality to what is circumscribed,—thus establishing that all His scattered and partial inflictions have shadowed out a general rule and pledged a final arbitration!

VI. The claims of universal consent are on the side of a judgment.

We popularly speak of conscience; and many a flattering title has been given to it. Yet it is to be feared that the general opinion is fallacious. For when we call it monitor, the vicegerent of heaven, the inward oracle, the starry ray,—is there not an impression that it must be right to follow its authoritative guidance? But what can be more contradictory than the consciences of mankind? It cannot be a distinct power of the soul, or a state in which all souls may be expected to discover themselves,—it is nothing but the conception a man takes of religious duty, the judgment of his mind on what involves the relations which unite him to his Maker. Still while it is the simplest mental act, it closes with an original capacity and law of our being. We were made accountable creatures. It does not glance over us as do many indifferent opinions,—it falls in with the primal bias of our nature. Conscience, then, is man's judgment about his religious obligations, he being designed and impelled to form one. And does not this, however taught, by whatever creed it may be regulated, solemnly assure us of such

an issue? Does it not, with its steadiest index, denote it? Does it not, with its deepest knell, forewarn it? Why does it make cowards of us all, but that it converts us all into candidates, who shall be summoned to this Dread Tribunal? He is but a sophist, who, though he does not reason against the common opinion of material things which the progress of science often corrects, derides the deeper sympathies and moral impressions of mankind.

Traverse the earth,—enter the gorgeous cities of idolatry, or accept the hospitality of its wandering tribes,—go where will-worship is most fantastic, and superstition most gross,—and you will find in man "a fearful looking for of judgment." The mythology of their Nemesis may vary,—their Elysium and Tartarus may be differently depicted,—the Metempsychosis may be the passage of bliss and woe,—still the fact is only confirmed by the diversity of the forms in which it is presented. If this be an *innate law of susceptibility*, then it must have been impressed by the Creator. But was it a false expectation of which man was made the dupe? Or could his Creator thus sport with his happiness?* If it be not innate, then it is a universal *tradition*. Still, whence did it originate? What was its source? Is it to be traced to an original pair, or any other presumed stems of the human family? It is then what the earliest progenitors believed. But there must have been an inducement and a ground. Their conviction may sustain that of their posterity, but what sustained their own? The cause may be displaced again and again; the fulcrum may be shifted, the difficulty may be removed; but it is only grown more serious and formidable by the prevarication. For surely if man at his creation (and we hold no debate with the asserters of an eternal succession of creatures!) believed that God would

* "Nature, whose dictates to no other kind
Are given in vain, but what they ask they find."—POPE.

judge the world, it was one of the most simple and early lessons which His finger ever traced on the table of the human heart. That which was always believed by the species, though an Epicureism of the few has laboured to resist it, must have its basis in what is settled and immutable.*

The *probable* is the only kind of evidence we have hitherto employed. *We* are not to be blamed for this,—because if the term be understood in the acceptation of the schools, "probable" is the only kind of which any moral subjects admit, not even excluding those which are historical; and if only taken in the vulgar sense, we have resorted to it in compliance with the necessity of our argument, and the predicament of our opponent,—leaving our own "more sure word of prophecy."

But it must be felt that the greater part of what has been already advanced implies the doctrine of a *future state.* Though we have not formally propounded it, almost all has necessitated the inference. For the *judgment* which we seek to argue as true and certain, does not in any proper shape occur on the stage of this world, or during the term of this life. It has to do with the departed spirit; its review and sentence are reserved for an invisible region, and its influence forms the character

* Bayle, in his Dictionary, (Rotterdam, 1697,) has the following remarks, which are not the less weighty because he was not favourable to Christianity; "Toutes les religions du monde, tant la vraye que les fausses, roulent sur ce grand pivot, qúil y a un juge invisible qui punit, et qui recompense aprés cette vie les actions de l'homme, tant exterieures qu'interieures. Cést de lā que l'on supose que decoule la principale utilitè de la religion; cést le principal motif qui eût animé ceux qui l'auroient inventeé. Il est assez évident quén cette vie les bonnes actions ne conduisent pas au bien temporal, et que les mauvaises sont le moyen le plus ordinaire et le plus sur de faire fortune: afin done d'empêcher l'homme de se plonger dans le crime, et de le porter a la vertu, il auroit été necessaire de lui proposer des peines, et des recompenses après cette vie. C'est la ruse que les esprits forts attribuënt ā ceux qu'ils pretendent avoir été les premiers Autours de la religion." Page 1087.

of an immortal duration. It is for others to contend that an existence bounded by death is a complete existence; that the awful enigmas which surround the thinking being, await no ultimate solution; that the stewardship of so many trusts, as are committed to man, will not be required; and that Jehovah has ordained no era at which he will vindicate his government, and roll the clouds and darkness which have shrouded it eternally away. Our belief of a Judgment forbids the thought that this is the only scene and life, and debars the fell hazard of annihilation!

And an examination of the Deistical writers cannot fail to convince us, that few, in any tangible sense, embrace the immortality of the soul. Herbert is an exception; but his natural theology is but a stolen likeness of Christianity. Others have been more consistent, and forbear to put such extravagant assumptions into their premises. Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke constantly intimate, that at most the doctrine is unsettled, that it is indifferent; and that any reference to future rewards and punishments, is incompatible with a love of virtue. The French Encyclyopædists, if they belong not to a class of deeper infidelity, openly explode it. Scarcely any of the present day will allow for a moment the immateriality of the mind; and therefore it cannot be expected that they should believe that it survives the stroke of death. The resurrection of the body, it were foolish for them to anticipate, but on the voucher of a divine revelation. The nearest approach that the majority make, who believe at all in a future state, is that of a chemical re-production without consciousness; while the scantling who retain the doctrine of an escape, a preservation of the intelligent principle at the deposition of the body, stand like wrecked mariners on some slippery rock, with the ocean constantly rising upon them. It is unquestionable that they, who repel with equal decision the charge of Atheism and the

profession of Revelation, (and whom therefore we allot to the middle community of them who avow a First Cause, and affect to decypher from constituted nature his righteous will)—it is fully proved that they, with very rare exceptions, believe not in the immortality of the soul, nor in any future state of retribution.

So far we speak to facts: but we do not wonder that such immortality should be denied by the free-thinker. It consists not gracefully with infidelity. It is too vast a consummation for its system. The point rises not from its pyramid, the pyramid is built upon its point. The Deist seems to watch his opportunity to shake off the unwieldly incumbrance. He cannot find use nor solace in it. But we would remind him that as Judgment is not invalidated should Christianity be disproved, so the immortality of the human soul is not falsified on the same alternative. And yet how many shelter themselves in this sophism from the fear of immortality! How many think that they shall not live forever, if it can be shewn that a revealed religion is unfounded! Impotent folly,—like the hope of the hunted ostrich, burying its eyes in the sand, that not seeing its danger, its pursuers may not behold their prey!

It is only just that this inconsistency should be put in its true light. Christianity affirms our future existence as its postulate. It is not the revelation of the fact, but a description of its nature, and a provision for its beatification. And it is for him who impugns "the word of life," still to bear the burden of his own immortality as he can! The only difference between him and his fellow travellers toward eternity is, that he has thrown away the torch and the staff, which the others acknowledge to enlighten and help them!

The argument must rest with the Infidel: he must prove that man is *not* immortal: for this is the obligation on any one who sets himself in defiance of general consent.

Now whatever is, may still be: a body impelled into motion continues in motion: and the presumption is, that man, who at present exists, will always exist, unless the strongest reasons can be opposed. Is such a contrivance likely to perish?—And if he continue to exist, should not his being, as it advances, become more grave? extricated from its littleness of pursuit, and disciplined of its frivolity in taste? Is not his immortality the pledge of a more solemn state of things? Can the *grub* of time be the *butterfly* of eternity?

Death will, however, be urged as the palpable extinction of the being. But no man will assert that then a single atom of the body is destroyed. The organic structure is altered; fibre and fluid are decomposed; the whole enters into new combinations, but not a particle is lost. Why may not the same be true of the soul? It was held by the body,—the body has been affected by mechanical causes which could not reach the soul,—the soul has become disengaged. Many changes took place in that body through life, and yet the soul was the same. And to the last, amidst the wreck of its corporeal vehicle, how often does it triumph! I speak not of the hero, the martyr, the patriot who kisses the block, the chief who chants the death-song,—but of one whose springs of life are all shivered, and all his vigours spent. There a lambent fire plays, which no chill and damp of death can extinguish. There a might puts forth itself, victorious in that grasp beneath which all things wither. And have we not witnessed the holy spectacle? The mind rising in majesty, while all its barriers were falling from around it! the gem flashing with new brightness, while its setting was destroyed! It is then greatest when it might be expected to yield,—then freest when it might be expected to waver,—then boldest when it might be expected to shrink! "Death is thus a spontaneous act, a more ardent prayer

of the mind."* Are not then the probabilities strongly in favour of the soul's independence and indestructibleness? And should a desire be felt to confuse the properties of matter and spirit, of which the human being in his present state is compounded, we shall again remit the disputant to the common sense of mankind. All allow them to be as different things as differing and inconvertible properties can prove them. And whatever physiological hardihood has dared, we wait with perfect composure for it to prove, that man is a mere machine; that intellect is the result of organization and a modification of matter most subtilized and attenuated; that thought is an effect of refined substance and arrangement, even though it will allow that no more of grossness enters into its nature than into the effluvium of a rose, and the tone of a vibration. And if soul and body be such foreign essences, how can it be supposed that they are subject in themselves to the same accidents, or perish by the same fates?

And on the supposition that there is no immortality for man, let the sceptic attempt to vindicate the character of his God. It cannot be denied that it is the fervid aspiration of our nature, that the cessation of being is regarded by us as the greatest possible infliction, and that each yearning of our bosom disposes us to "give all that we have for our life." Something of this feeling, we admit, may have been benevolently given, though death were the last scene of all, as a precautionary instinct, that we might prize and guard so important a deposit. But this is a nobler tending of our being. It cannot bear that its garner of affections and its treasure of purest delights shall, in a moment, be crushed. It cannot endure that its high studies and wonderful acquirements shall be instantaneously blotted into night. It cannot brook the sudden transition from the intellectual soar, into the sleepless clod. And yet the theist must conceive that the

* De Stael.

Deity has raised these hopes to crush them, and taught men to ascend a mount, whence they might descry the boundless prospect, that they might die on that mount. And thus represented cruel to man, He is described as equally unjust to himself. His creatures, made capable of understanding him, are perplexed with his conduct, but confide in its destined explanation. They have seen only "a part of Him." They have heard but a passage of an infinite history, and beheld but a scene of the eternal drama. They "wait the great teacher—Death, and God adore!" But while their spirits are rapt in anxiety, they perish in the suspense! ready to burst into the song of wonder, love, and praise, their lips are sealed in endless silence!

Let, then, the unbeliever consider his case. He is hastening to Judgment! He will soon enter Eternity! His rejection of Christianity does not, to the slightest degree, alter these laws of his being. For him there is no pause, no choice. He is borne resistlessly forward. However his spirit may recoil, his step cannot. Each moment, each pulse, testifies his progress. He is always accountable, and shall live always. Let him now look into his futurity. Is he not aghast at the bleak dreary prospect? Little knows he of his Judge. He is just; but may he not be capriciously so, since his operations, as far as we have seen them, are not uniform? May He not be relentless in his justice, since innocence, when connected with any guilty party, has been frequently destroyed in the same blast of wrath? If merciful, may he not withhold it, for often the cry of misery has been ungranted? He is invested with no fixed character, and acts upon no assigned rule. Intimations and conjectures are the only elements out of which he can gather to himself any manner of similitude. Such a God is the creature's work: he is *vanity*, and *cannot save?* And is it a light thing to meet a God at uncertainty? Is it a light thing to stand

before a God only hitherto recognized from the most contradictory appearances? Is it a light thing to find the possible terror without the possible relief?—And what is the *immortality* which such a person may expect? Has he any proof that a future life may not be far more painful than this? Has he any proof that the pains from which death here releases us, may not there perpetuate themselves without release? Has he a presentiment how that duration is to be occupied? Does he trace a waymark along that mysterious road? The Atheist has no appeal but to mechanical chance: the Deist none but to moral fickleness. What, with their views, may not await them! If there be no God, as the former says, then the fortuitous power which happily composed his form below, may in some far-off world leave him as miserable as lurking poisons and gnawing griefs can make him,—the chance which caused this life to be agreeable, may render his immortality horrible,—may drive it where tempest only resounds and darkness dwells,—may exile it from all sympathy and intercourse to an impenetrable solitude,—may abandon it to a despair so unutterably deep, that it cannot hope that a God exists to finish its miseries! And if there be such a God, as the second affirms, then there may be the severity of justice, perchance the mildness of forbearance. But a darker cloud may cross the prospect than that of a dread uncertainty. He has not disproved revelation to the confutation of millions: perhaps never unfailingly convinced himself. Should Christianity be true; should it contain the precise information our understandings require, and the exact remedy our transgressions need; should it be all that was wanted to unveil the character and purpose of Nature's God; then what must be the remorse of the spirit that passed through its light without irradiation, and walked beneath its pity without blessing! And be it as he thinks: ah, what has infidelity, such as his, to fill immortality!

With his views of human nature and divine government, how shall it not linger and fatigue? What transport has his religion ever awakened, what song has it ever attuned, to swell through the compass of each successive period? It knows nothing of gratitude for eternal deliverance, nothing of tender humility, nothing of awe at the mysteries of one ceaseless agency to save the sinner, nothing of sweet penitence. It has no assurance of a congeniality between the condition of the immortal and his abode. It has no pledge that the welcome of his first greeting, beyond this present state, may not degenerate into cold neglect. It has no security that new creations may not divert the attention he now enjoys, while he may be cast away as the refuse of a system which has completed its ends. Oh bitter immortality, in which no object relieves, no remembrance harmonizes, no promise assures! Oh cold uncertain lengthening out of a being which is vanity and vexation of spirit! In vain ye call to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us! Ye seek death and cannot find it; and desire to die, and death flees from you!*

And it may be added, that—be it a reduction to absurdity, or an argumentative appeal to shame—nothing intervenes between a belief of revelation and a denial of the Deity. The concession of such a Being is inconsistent without a moral character: and his moral character is inconsistent without an assent to Christianity. The Theist has no retreat, no stand: all that he knows of God requires a future, all that he divines of the future blasphemes a God. Painful as is the plea, we must urge it: and we cannot but decide that the Atheist is the more consistent of the two.

After this delay, tedious and even circumlocutory but for the sake of the argument, it is our unspeakable satisfaction to introduce "the glad tidings of Christianity." And here we may, before we disclose all its blessed

* Rev. ix. 6.

intelligence, publish an argument implied in it against the disputer of its claims. Twelve men promulgated it, and even they were not secularly qualified to recommend it. Let Christianity be a fable! Then is it but a human device. But it attests that all men believed in *some judgment:* receiving, assuming this, if it were not so, it would be a mockery on human nature. It could have no success had it not met such dread foreboding: it could never have undeceived the world of this universal impression. Yet these impressions did, or did not pre-exist. If they did, then man is all this, agreeably to our argument, independently of any belief in revelation; if not, then must *revelation,* from the first promise until now, have spread these unnatural impressions among the human race. Either horn of the dilemma is fatal to infidelity.

Christianity would appear founded upon an anticipation of our circumstances as *accountable* and *immortal* creatures. And there are those who thus reduce and stint it. They have no more sublime conception of it than that it explains our *obligations,* and certifies our *prospects.* They think it is only the light of reason made to burn more brightly, and but the voice of nature speaking with unprecedented distinctness. With them the Gospel is but the re-enacted law. But is it good news to inform the sinner of a code he has violated, and of an immortality, rather than endure which it were better that he had not been born? Far other are its proclamations; they declare the *pardon* of our *guilt,* the *purification* of our *nature,* and the conversion, by these means, of an undone eternity into an eternal good. "On Mount Zion is deliverance and there is holiness."

And let him who will confess that he is something more than a being religious and imperishable, — that he is a sinner,—think of the importance which belongs to the inquiry, "*How can man be just with God?*" The Christian doctrine calms the shudder of the culprit, and assures him of pardon and acceptance.

Justification is a term of Scripture, and Scripture must decide its own use of the term. It cannot be, according to its conventional import, a vindication of rectitude, an assertion of innocence, for it places "the whole world guilty before God." It cannot declare that which is not true, nor constitute that which is not real; and therefore it cannot *declare* nor *constitute* the sinner otherwise than he is. But it may *treat* man as *righteous,* without any contradiction, or in other words, it may reverse his doom. It does not "impute his trespasses unto him." It does not exact their punishment. Now this manner of dealing with the sinner is called "the righteousness of God." It is a singular phrase, because *righteousness* is more naturally connected with the enforcement of a sentence upon guilt. But it has thus enounced its glorious peculiarity. *It treats us as righteous on the ground of a righteousness.* Then it must be another's. And this righteousness must be produced in obeying the precept, and enduring the penalty, of the law. Can this, however, be a moral consideration, on the weight of which millions of millions may be justified? This depends upon a relative matter. Who has "brought in this everlasting righteousness?" "Jesus Christ the Righteous." His infinite dignity of person has stamped an equal character on his work. And therefore its "righteousness" is *contrasted* with "condemnation."* Oh wonderful provision! Mercy employs a righteousness as the medium of its exercise, but then that righteousness she herself has yielded!

And as there is but one ground on which a holy God can meet and receive the sinner—a *righteousness*—it must be that of his Messiah, or our own. Nor can these be confounded and admixed. Wholly must the business proceed on the one or the other. We must be justified by works, or without them. They must be reckoned to us, or abjured. The law demands our love to God with all

* II Cor. iii. 9.

our heart, and love to our neighbour equal to that we possess for ourselves. It denounces punishment against all disobedience. We may be assured that it cannot be relaxed in its conditions or sanctions. In vain you think that it is not in earnest, or that it contains in itself a remedy. It is *law!* It is the law of *God!* Has he required too much? Will he annul his statute? Can he change? Abide by your choice. If you demand a right, no right shall you be refused. Let justice be your claim, and never can this be denied to the creature who pleads it. But you must keep to the rigid unblenching ideas of *right* and *claim.* You must mean by them what God intends. You stand forth and answer for yourself! You sue acceptance! You challenge your personal title to it! Have you a spotless obedience to adduce? Perhaps now you resort to evasion. You substitute sincerity. You oppose good works to them which are evil. You deprecate the strictest severity. You admit an imperfection, and seek a mitigation. But thus you recall your appeal. Now you vary your process. Boldly you pushed your way to the judgment-seat. Nothing has been done, but according to your own urgency. You undertook your defence. Blame us not if we carry you farther than your imagined restriction. The deed is all your own. The defiance you have sounded, the arena you have selected, the scrutiny you have braved! You have appealed unto justice: unto justice you shall go!—Ah, again consider, be of another mind, "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." He will meet, can only meet, you at the Cross! "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." When He shall "call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge his people," when all "these things shall be dissolved," when shall roll along the heavens the dread echoes of "the last trump," say, whither then will you fly? on what then will you lean? will you

rush on the sword of justice, or into the embrace of mercy? Will high-crested pride then disdain this Righteousness of God by faith, "the garment of salvation," that there may flutter around its own deformity but shameful tatters and filthy rags? Jehovah will lack no attestation of his uprightness: He will be "justified when he speaketh, and be clear when he judgeth:" "the heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is Judge himself." He would have "declared even *at that time* his righteousness in the remission of sins," but the vain-glorious sinner has "provoked him to jealousy," dared him to rigour, and plucked the bolt from his hand!

But Christianity, addressing us as creatures of accountability and immortality, proposes another and an *equal* benefit: and while *justification* blends itself with judgment as a *forensic inquest*, *Sanctification* is not less important and essential to indicate and conduct the process of a *moral discrimination*. He will then gather his saints unto him. His elect will he bring from the four winds of heaven. His servants are sealed. If a man love God, the same is known of him. The Lord knoweth them that are his.

Suppose that a man is pardoned, nay more is accepted; that the sentence of a violated law is withdrawn, and the thunder of the angry Deity sleeps; suppose that every legal restraint and barrier to his intercourse with an infinitely holy God is removed, and that the light of that God's revealed countenance is thrown with mildest lustre around him;—still, with a contrariety of temper, and repugnance of character, in what a tremendous difficulty is he involved! And what is that? Not of guilt, we argue that to be cancelled; not of punishment, we presume that to be reversed. Yet is there a mountain he cannot level, a great gulf he cannot pass. It is his unrectified nature, it is his unconquered self! Though God should not repel him, though heaven should not exclude him, he carries in

his own bosom the foul disqualification for all good, for all use, for all happiness! Did he attempt to approach the altar before the throne and burn incense, the leprosy would rise up in his forehead; nor would it require the attendants of the temple to thrust him from its courts, for, like the smitten monarch, he "himself would hasten also to go out." Though he might still be welcome to abide under his Father's roof, with the restlessness of the prodigal he would soon once more exile himself. How could he bear to meet that eye in whose pure beam he read his shame? How could he dwell upon those features in which he saw no reflected image of his own disposition? How could he clasp those feet on which he had never let fall a tear of penitence? How could he listen to that voice whose accents would only jar on his untuned soul? If the disqualification of the human mind for the divine service and vision were but only a partial obliquity, it might retrieve itself; if it were only an interspersion of the good with a little evil, the evil might be subdued by the good; if it were only the warm passion of youth, age and discipline might eventually control it. But it is an estrangement, an apostacy of the heart. It is utter ungodliness. "Marvel not that we say unto you, Ye must be born again." Thus is imprinted a mark of holy disdistinctiveness, of a separation for a holy use, which the angels shall recognize and respect, when the final discrimination shall be made between the righteous and the wicked, the wheat in their sheaves, and the tares in their bundles!

What then are we? "We must give account." We must live for ever. This is the ordination, whether a revealed religion accost us or not: whether or not Christianity be a revealed religion. "God will bring us into judgment." But if ever such revealed religion could adapt itself to our necessities, what is comparable with Christianity? It is one anticipation of our wants, an entire

answer to our forebodings. It is regulated upon the principle of our condition. It prepares us for the trumpet which *otherwise* would sound; and for the tribunal which, *in the most different circumstances*, would be equally erected. It meets us in the way by which we approach this dread consummation with its blessings. For that *assize* it provides a *plea*,—for that *discrimination* a *character*. It goes with us to the bar, and accompanies us through immortality. Like the Saviour, what it "hath seen and heard, that it testifieth;" like the Saviour, it hath "gone to prepare a place for us." Beneath its influence the tribunal becomes a sanctuary, and immortality no longer dispreads away a cheerless blank or possible disgust of being, but a prospect lovely as it is interminable—the scene of a right activity and of a conscious progression. Infidelity pulls down every refuge, repels each remedy, and only interposes for the sinner to stand between him and any help. It leaves him with "the works of the law written in his heart," under all his self-conviction,—and with "the wounded spirit" unsoothed, which "none can bear"—but no peace does it suggest, no hope can it impart. It serves but to exasperate the accusation of conscience, and to barb the sting of remorse. It deepens the suspense of life, and haunts the bed of death. It flings us on our destinies as unfeelingly as hopelessly!* But Christianity is the religion which we want. It makes light of nothing. It does not teach us to lessen our estimate of judgment and immortality in order more indifferently to meet them. It throws all its energy and pomp into their description. It excites us to the measure of our faculty to muse, and to the fulness of our capacity to feel. Of "that great and terrible day of the Lord," it utters warnings only inferior to the reality. It has no

* How justly might we exclaim with the Poet, though not with his impious sarcasm, when we describe infidelity,—

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!"

LUCRETIUS DE RERUM NATURA: Lib. 1.

office of reducing and allaying the scenery. It makes all that can belong to that catastrophe most serious. It has heightened all. It has enlarged our responsibility, and consequently our account. The grandeur of Him who "cometh in clouds," owes itself to this system of mediatorial grace. Much of "the terror of the Lord," arises from the very love "which passeth knowledge." It is not a small thing to pass from evangelical overture and hope, to the irrevocable sentence. The religion of the Cross superadds to whatever is most rigorous and most august in those transactions. It gives a more piercing clangor to the trumpet; and burnishes, with a fiercer magnificence, the judgment-seat. And yet is there a peace which it bestows so soft and sure, that even now, with these portendings within us, "our hearts condemn us not;" and there is a process, which it conducts, so distinctive that we may say, "Now are we the sons of God." Let it come as "travail on the woman," as "the thief in the night," as "the lightning which shineth from the east unto the west," "we, through the Spirit, look for the hope of acquittal by faith." "Therefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." The "testimony of Jesus" teaches us how to "love his appearing." Leaving it in all its majesty, it clothes it with whatever is attractive. "All judgment is committed unto the Son." He wears our nature, and returns with "the *sign* of the Son of *man!*" The "pierced one," He comes again "unto salvation!" The thunder-blast is but "the voice of your Beloved!" The rich garniture of heaven, as it unfolds "the great white throne," marks but the lofty mid-way which invites you "to meet the Lord in the air!" And from the final conflagration you shall rise, like the angel that appeared to Manoah, as from an altar-flame, to the heaven whither he returned, wafted on the very fire of the sacrifice, and amidst the very breath of the incense!—Amen.

SERMON XI.

JESUS CHRIST CREATOR AND LORD OF THE UNIVERSE.

Colossians i. 16.

For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM, AND FOR HIM.

It is a solemnly bold adventure of mind to revert to the period, deep-hid among "the years of the right hand of the Most High," when this world we inhabit — so prominent in interest, so vast in dimension, so ancient in date, according to the manner in which such creatures must be affected by all comparisons of feeling, size, and duration— yet such an atom to the revolving systems, such a spark to the central luminaries of the universe, — did not exist. Inconceivable by us is the gulf of its void, the midnight of its extinction. Frightful solitude! Its darkness had never been irradiated, its depth never sounded, its waste never explored. Unbroken had been that long interval of silence, unrelieved that large field of space. For we know that there could not but have been a moment in which our earth *was not:* when the question was between nothingness and creation: when not a particle of matter and beam of light appeared to denote that it should soon bend into convexity and burst into splendour. "Before

the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting there was a God."—"The Ancient of Days" arose! At his command accumulated the elements of things,—rude, huge, shapeless,—into the mass which he now prepared for the materials of our habitation, But how unlike that pile, the abode which it was destined to build! No life filled its caverns, no vegetation mantled its surfaces, no beauty relieved its horrors, no order compacted its parts. "The earth was without form, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." What a confusion of substances! What a rush of waters! What a deformity of aspects! What a whirlwind of opposing causes and contending powers sweeping over it, strewing desolation, bellowing rage! What could still that uproar? subdue that anarchy? attune that jar?—Again He arose, "even he that abideth of old." "He declared the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Long lay the type of creation in his searchless bosom. From eternity it had there been revolved. It now emanates in the perfection of beauty. It now beams out with the self-furnished evidences of wisdom and of love. Chaos hears and obeys! The work is begun and swiftly hastens to its consummation. The waters fall back to appointed channels; the solid masses are fixed to sustain and bind a framework of a thousand orders and kinds; the distorted twinklings of light are embodied and find "their tabernacle in the sun;" the rugged shapes swell into lovely forms, and melt away into enchanting landscapes; the repulsive differences of attraction, instead of agitating the globe to its centre, gird and balance it; the latent seeds of each fair flower and luscious fruit break out along the river which flowed in Eden to water the garden; and the wild war of discords hushes into the soft sunrise, and fragrant breath, and holy calm of a Sabbath-Dawn, in

which God rested from his work and "was refreshed,"* in which man "made upright" stretched forth his hands to his Father-creator, with songs of praise comely for one so upright, and with the effectual fervent prayer of one so righteous; in which higher intelligences took a holy sympathy, and performed a benevolent part,—while hanging with wondering delight over the teeming scene, the sons of God pressed into view and shouted for joy!

On one question there can be no dispute. This world must have had an origin, that origin must have consisted with a cause, that cause must have been intelligent, that intelligence must have been ultimate, that ultimate power must have been supreme, that supremacy must have been divine, or what we call and know by the awful name of God. But we are unwilling to trust farther to reason when we can command the ground of revelation. Our convictions are not so much the deductions of argument as the results of faith. And when scorn has spit its spleen, when infidelity has mooted its cavil, when we have listened to each grave disquisition on spontaneous outbirth and self-generative life; when we have even attended to the last absurdity and closing pretext of eternal matter,—this is our reply: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." "But this they are willingly ignorant of."†

* Exod. xxxi. 17.

† As the whole of the ensuing discourse attempts nothing but the exposition of a doctrine which never could have been known but by Revelation, it may be well to let the reader understand how that revelation is regarded by some who boast their title to the Christian name: "With the Rationalist it is reason alone that decides in matters of faith, and in the adoption of religious doctrine. The Scriptures are to him nothing more than any other human book. He allows their authority only when they coincide with his own convictions; and that not as the determining grounds of those convictions, for these he regards as true on their own grounds of reason; but simply as an illustration that others also, wise men of former times, have thought and believed in the same manner. The Rationalist considers the assumption of a direct supernatural revelation as inadmissible and groundless. He sees in

But why was this orb, stored as it is with inexhaustible resources, peopled as it is with swift successions of inhabitants,—why was it reared? Was it just to circle its mazy path? Was it only to deck immensity with another gem? Was it simply to intersect the infinite vault above, around, beneath us, with another beacon and way-mark? Were all the mighty springs of this complex machine wound up, all its wheels set in motion, that the experiment might be concluded, All is Vanity? or that the complaint might be justified, Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? No! it is appropriated to a noble service, to a magnificent use. Sooner shall it wander from its course and start from its sphere, than this purpose shall be frustrated and reversed. And who is the Claimant to the world's creation and the world's design? Christians! He "whose worthy name ye bear;" He in whose "cross ye glory;" He "whom the nations abhorred;" He whom "we esteemed not,"—He is "the Almighty!" "He is Lord of all." His voice woke up universal existence, and his hand bound it to his purpose. He uttered its fiat! He imposed its law! As the stage of transactions at once most dread and benevolent; of interests the most sublime and precious; He hung our earth upon nothing! And when first this new and unknown Star arose, it pointed not, like that of Bethlehem, the course of mercy to some other world over which it bent and shone,—but flashed from the brow of the firmament as her chosen care, her palace-home; and spread a day-spring of salvation over the realms of heaven, and the hosts of God.

The text, clearly and strongly as words can serve, propounds these facts of Christ's *work* and *property* — it

the Scriptures nothing more than a human book, in which noble and wise men of former times have laid up, entirely in the ordinary manner, the results of their reflection and investigation upon the truths of religion." ! ! !—Letters on Rationalism, by Dr. Röhn, General Superintendent and First Court Preacher, Weimar. This is Neology, the fondling of Socinianism, and the more consistent of the two.

asserts him to be the *efficient* and *final* cause of the entire creation. Such are the truths affirmed, and such are the themes we propose for meditation.

I. THOSE IDEAS WHICH WE ATTACH TO HIM WHO IS OUR CREATOR ARE DUE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, HE HAVING PRODUCED THE UNIVERSAL SYSTEM OF BEING.

This is represented as no partial operation of His power, —as employing itself in no contracted spot,—or as only developing itself in this earth, with the sky which pavilions it, and the satellite which attends it, its oceans and continents, its lakes and isles. It wanders not alone: but a sweet fellowship of sister-spheres is bound together, cheering each other from afar, and from one telling it to all of a mutual law and indissoluble bond. Within the limits of this smaller economy burns the sun, so that in the act of creation, from which our abode arose, we necessarily include all the planetary apparatus, knowing that then the centre was fixed, and that each globe was launched in its circlings around it. The mundane and sublunary form only a little fragment of the work, an inferior department of the great transaction. And what are the few worlds which sweep with us about the same source of life and light? Massive, ponderous, in themselves: some of them immensely larger than our own, running wider revolutions, and drawing after them brighter trains. But even this one solar family, recognizing and claiming members in the outskirts of space,—it is as nothing to what the eye can command, nothing to the *visible!* What constellations are thrown over the firmament in all the profusion of beauty and magnificence! And when the unaided sense has roamed to its utmost ken, and gazed to its utmost strength, it may call the instruments of science to its assistance; and it shall look out on ampler territories, and take hold of larger notices. Now we leave our nook. We speak in no terms of exaggeration when we describe hat we see as *beds,* and *floors,* and *clouds,* of stars. As

we pierce the awful altitudes, we ascend to new wonders. Apertures constantly open, and we are just suffered a glimpse into them. Heaven spreads above heaven, new arrangements stand revealed, and celestial bodies, in shapes hitherto undeveloped, flame as at the portal of the Eternal Throne, to guard its access and proclaim its terribleness. Yet even there are proofs that discovery has not closed its researches: still avenue verges from avenue, and height rises into height. And after all, this is but the outer court of "His high and holy place." But how much more of the universe is *invisible!* Matter may subsist in forms of which we have no conception; nor can we doubt that it may extend indefinitely. And a thousand essences may inhere in the constitution of things that the qualities by which we discriminate matter cannot denote, and the senses by which we determine it cannot examine. Spirit through all its rank, the instinct of the worm, the wisdom of the angel, must be comprehended. It includes the heirarchy of "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers:" [and not only "the elect angels," but "the angels who sinned." The summary of these operations is, "all things that are in heaven and that are in earth."

It is not an unnatural inference that a *divine interposition* was necessary to produce this effect. What *wisdom* may be traced in the contrivance of all things! their arrangement in system, their subserviency to utility,—the appropriateness of the part, the perfection of the whole. How little do we know of our own frame, and yet what a workmanship is it, as far as we comprehend it, of wonderful designs and adaptations! How much more are we perplexed when we apply our scrutiny to the mind, its connection with the body, its independence of such connection, its power to invent and combine, its susceptibility of emotion, its challenge of immortality! Who can conceive the intelligence which measured all this subordination of agency, and adjusted all this correspondence of

result?—*Power* is an attribute as essential as wisdom to the consummation of this plan. Understanding this in no lofty sense, attaching to it only an executory idea, there are no known, no conceivable, modifications of created force and strength which could originate the meanest atom. Mechanism may obviate risk, save time, and economize labour; but it cannot add a particle to the mass of the universe: it may most strangely transform substances, but it cannot call one into existence.—In the accommodation of this dwelling and its furniture to our capacities and wants, we read a *goodness* equal to the wisdom and power which creation demonstrates; nor is it unworthy evidence of a divine act. For in this we see the *end* for which wisdom has suggested, and power has constructed, the phenomena of human nature, together with all the scenery and convenience of its abode.—Nor can we fail to remark that *authority* of the highest order is demanded for the right of this stupendous work. It lies not within any prerogative of which we can conceive less than divine, —to break the pause of eternity, to cover space with being, and to place creatures not only beneath a constant protection, but a moral rule. It belongs only to Him whom none can interrogate. "What doest thou?" To "reason's ear" one testimony is borne: and all things proclaim that "the hand which made them is Divine."

After all, Revelation is the only authoritative standard of appeal. The different theories which have been advanced of an energetic principle, and pregnant cause, and mysterious incubation, are unsubstantial as the shadows which brooded over the dark abyss ere the fabric of nature was deposited in it, while the sayings and explanations of Scripture are firm and unyielding as the "world" which, in comparison with its "generations," "abideth for ever."

In pursuing the argument, we admit that the work of creation does not necessarily prove, apart from the aver-

ments of inspiration, the absolute Deity of him who accomplishes it. There are beings transcendently superior to man, and yet they are but creatures. One of those "who excel in strength" may surpass all our notions of limitation and control: he may be "clothed with a cloud," he may have "a rainbow upon his head," his "face may be as the sun," he may "set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth." It would be presumptuous to say that a power to create could not be delegated to them, unless we possess an infallible contradiction. Besides, creation, whatever be its breadth, and depth, and height, is but a finite effect. We talk of infinite space; and as its supposed boundary must be in space or not, it is easy to see that the boundary may be removed, must retreat, for ever. This is, however, rather metaphysical subtlety than solid truth; but our question is not with space, whatever it be, but with a particular occupation of it. We say that that occupation of it, being but a finite result, does not indispensably prove an infinite agent. Our concession is, therefore, twofold: that we cannot, by any original reasoning, adjudge what trust and task God may assign to a creature, and that a determinate work cannot argue an omnipotent cause.

"What saith the Scripture?" We open it to ascertain the precise value, and the legitimate scope, of the creative act; and the character of Him who exclusively and necessarily performs it. The following series of observations will elicit the bearing of the sacred volume on this question.

1. *The creative act is uniformly ascribed to the Deity.*

"God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. He giveth to all life and breath, and all things. In Him we live, and move, and have our being." "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." "God rested on the seventh day

from all his works." "Now he who built all things is God." No language can be more precise, no suffrage more concurrent. And this coincides with those features of decisive energy which indicate Him who is "excellent in working." "He calleth those things which be not as though they were." And he educed them by direct command, "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

2. *This act is the ground on which the highest claims and honours are required for the Divine Nature.*

A primary duty which we owe to God is the acknowledgment of his being and government by *worship*. Nothing can be more reasonable and binding. And yet it is rested upon the announcement, that he is *Creator*. "Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him: for he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast." "Know ye that the Lord, he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts; the earth, and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all: and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."* "Fear God, and give glory unto him, and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." This is the sanction of the Sabbath. He who "in six days made heaven and earth," is entitled to our homage, whoever he be: and a former proposition has established that the *creator* is God.——The *faithfulness* of His declarations to his creatures lies at the basis of his moral government over them; since, could a momentary doubt arise in respect to his veracity, they would lightly esteem his law, with all its safeguards of reward and punishment. But it

* Nehemiah ix. 6.

is upon the creating deed that he suspends the certainty of what he promises and threatens, thus urging our faith, because as he is the creator, it is impossible for the creator to deceive. "*Thus saith God the Lord,* he that created the heavens and stretched them out,—he that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it,—he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein." "For thus saith the Lord that *created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it,* he hath established it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right." "And the angel *sware* by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who *created* heaven, and the things that therein are; and the earth, and the things that therein are; and the sea, and things which are therein, that there should be time no longer." It follows, then, that whoever is our maker, may demand our most unqualified credence, and that no credence can support itself on so warrantable a hold. He who formed us from the dust, and "speaketh to us from heaven,"—is one and the same.—It is observable, that when the Supreme arrays himself in his *peculiar majesty,* when the saints sing most rapturously of his glory, the achievement of creation is mutually alleged. It is felt that an indubitable pre-eminence must belong to him who could signalize it. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath *created these things.* Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name." "When I consider thy heavens,

the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" None, then, can be higher than the creator; and He who is "higher than the highest," alleges not a nobler boast.—The manner in which the grandeur of this operation is adduced, to give terror to divine *menace*, and richness to divine *consolation*, bespeaks it to be a divine act itself. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." "The great God, that formed all things, rewardeth transgressors." "He that made them shall have no mercy on them, and he who formed them shall show them no favour." . . . . . "Thy Maker is thy husband." "But now, saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not." "The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things." "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and hath laid the foundations of the earth?" "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." It is therefore obvious that the greatest distributive happiness or misery must be awaited from the hand which fashioned the universe.

3. *The creative act is invariably recorded and enforced for the glory of the Being from whom it proceeded.*

It is a monument of praise to none other but himself. It stands for a witness to *his* skill and might. Whenever it is described, it is for the purpose of *his* aggrandisement. No intervening object is admitted, no superior is supposed. He who has devised and completed this work shall receive its attestation and bear its glory. And therefore we find that Jehovah is constantly adored for this "operation of his hands." "Bless the Lord, all *his* works, in all places of his dominions." It is resolved into his *will*: "For thou

hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Not only does it prove his absolute pleasure, but his *skilful* arrangement: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." Thus his wide *dominion* is proclaimed: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein: for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." The source, conservation, and tendency of these works is identical: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever." And, indeed, we should be unable to sustain one pious reflection, if creation did not express, and stand to honour, its original. But now, in not severing the act from the agent, we can exclaim: "O Lord, how great are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!" "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work, I will triumph in the works of thy hands." "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee!" We refer from the building to the architect: we "rise from nature up to nature's God."

4. *The creative act is the basis of natural religion.*

Effect supposes cause; and that primary system of morals which "nature teaches," and which reason allows, is but an inference from the one to the other. Can the world have been constituted by a fortuitous concourse and dance of atoms? Can it have always been? We are shut up to one conclusion, that it is a *work*, that it is a *contrivance*, and that the producing power still *presides* over it. The simple inquiry then is, what does this Power require of us? what are our obligations to our Creator, and those other creatures especially which belong to the same kind? Natural religion but asks, Who hath spangled that firmament? who

hath made this world? It then acknowledges Him as the ascertained object of worship and umpire of right. Now this bright volume of heaven, and this fair spectacle of earth, are unfolded with an adaptation and a design to teach us the being and character of their Author. "Hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundation of the earth?" "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Men saw an economy of things which could not be accidental; and "that which might be known of God was manifest in them, for God had shewed it unto them." Had they given it the thought which their trifling cares engross, or had they "liked to retain this knowledge," they would have spurned any equivocation. Their "soul would have followed hard after God," and their inquiries would have ended in adoration of his greatness, and in obedience to his will. "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. *That they should seek the Lord,* if haply they might feel after him and find him. Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art thou not he, O Lord God? *therefore will we wait upon thee, for thou hast made all these things.*" This is the resolve of impartial investigation; but there is an end to natural religion, there remains but irreconcileable confusion, if the Creator be not the ultimate source, the supreme essence, of all. The only dictate of our circumstances, as rational moral creatures, is, that we obey Him who has constituted us such creatures. Nor is there another right in God to govern us, but that he made us; nor reason for us to obey him, but that we were made by him. Our *dependence* and

obligation must rest on the same ground.* "Where is God my maker?" "This is the whole of man."

5 *The creative act is the general argument employed in the reprobation of idolatry.*

In shewing the folly of worshipping our own inventions, God has often resorted to the severest irony. He has derided the image of human fabrication, because the craftsman has of the same tree made the idol, burned part in the fire, baked bread on it, and roasted flesh by it.† But a more refined polytheism supposed an inferior race of agents; a class of œons, who were the formers of particular works, and presidents of particular departments. These were interposed between man and God. These are swept away by a stroke. "I am the first and the last. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God, I know not any." The error was in placing those, "who by nature are no gods," in the rank of creators, and yielding corresponding homage to them. An exception was frequently made on behalf of a First Cause, but it quickly lost any practical influence. "They worshipped and served the *creature* more than the *Creator*, who is blessed for ever." In this spirit the apostles subverted every system which

* What our great Poet puts into the mouth of Sin, "the snaky sorceress," when she addresses Satan, is the exact inference of nature :—

> "Thou art my father, thou my author, thou
> My being gav'st me; whom should I obey
> But thee, whom follow?"

And still truer to the argument are "the orisons" in which he makes our progenitors adore :—

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good!
> Almighty! Thine this universal frame
> Thus wondrous fair; Thyself how wondrous then!
> Unspeakable, who sit'st above these heavens
> To us invisible, or dimly seen
> In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
> Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."
>
> PARADISE LOST, BOOKS 2 & 5.

† Isaiah xliv. 15, &c.

encroached on the exclusive prerogative and distinction of the Deity. "We preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, *who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein:* and left not himself without a witness." And with the same spirit the prophets foretold the downfall of those fictitious powers, since they had not the slightest claim to the original ground of all worship, the *constitution of the universe:* "the gods that have *not made* the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens."

6. *The creative act is adduced as the sanction and emphasis of those specific blessings which we discover and derive from the evangelic revelation.*

Whatever are the truths we recognize in the scenery around us, those which His written word discloses are of another character. It is the Gospel of *salvation.* "God magnifies his word above all his name." But while he subordinates all things to this purpose, it is only because he is *creator*, that he is competent to act. The right to interpose for the rescue of the rebel-creature, is in the Being to whom the creature owes existence, and therefore fealty. Who but He can treat and regulate his own handy-work? Who can deliver out of his hand? Scripture therefore urges this idea: "He who is our God, is the God of salvation." Our redemption is not only his sufferance, but his doing. He whose temple of nature we profaned, rears the altar for the expiation of the sacrilege. Read we of *reconciliation?* "*All things are of God*, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." Are the *mediation and atonement* exhibited? "It became Him, *for whom are all things, and by whom are all things*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Is *spiritual illumination* described? "God, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, hath shined in our hearts, to give

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Is *divine protection* recommended? "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a *faithful Creator.*" Is the "*heavenly calling*" narrated? "It pleased God, who *separated me from my mother's womb,* and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." Then if this coincidence be just; if He who created, also redeems; our redemption must be indisputable as creative right, and efficient as creative energy: but, for an instant, allow that creation may be the work of an agent inferior to God, and this redemption, henceforth attributable to an inferior agent, is despoiled of its worth, and shorn of its grandeur.

7. *The creative act is alleged to have been unassisted and undivided.*

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him?" "I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretched forth the heavens *alone,* that spreadeth abroad the earth *by myself.*" "O give thanks unto the Lord, who *alone* doeth great wonders; to him that by wisdom made the heavens; to him who made great lights; for his mercy endureth for ever." "He *alone* spreadeth out the heavens, he maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south." "Other gods," and "strange gods," he covers with scorn and blasts with vengeance. He sought not aid of his strongest, he consulted not with his wisest, creatures: "behold he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly."

Such are the revealed descriptions of the creative act: it is a work appropriated to the Deity; it is discriminated as a work most distinctive, and signalized as one most

transcendent. And it is now scarcely necessary to repeat, that this work terminates in the fountain of all power and life. If the Greatest Being, the cause of every other being, is not the Creator, then have we never heard of him, nor been brought into contact with him. Then have our conceptions been absorbed in some intermediate object. Then has no clew been furnished to us that we may find out "the true God, the living God, the everlasting King." The scale which we have climbed has not carried us further than the throne of some exalted creature. Far off, in hopeless distance, the God of Gods may dwell, but there is no access to his presence-chamber. This mighty fabric is not his work; forms no ground for his claim to worship, veracity, pre-eminence, and power to "kill and to save;" does not witness to the glory of his skill and dominion; teaches no lesson of his character and will; justifies the idolatry of the secondary being who planned and accomplished it; lends no authority to the message of salvation; and yet excludes any possible demand on the part of another, because it was a single-handed and unaided deed of might and fame.*

But without limit, reserve, or qualification, this creative act is ascribed to Jesus Christ: is attributed to him with all the clearness which language can convey, and all the force which reiteration can express. Two instances only do we select. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him. In him was life. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."† The identity of this Word with the Lord Jesus Christ, admits of no rational dispute. Whatever a spurious criticism has hardily asserted, the phrase-

* The classical reader may be reminded of Evander's embarrassment, in Virgil:—"Quis Deus, incertum est." Æneid 8.

† John i. 1, &c.

ology most positively declares his formative interposition. —And no tribute can be more decisive and abundant than the language which the Psalmist addresses to Jehovah: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou shalt endure! they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end!" But the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, hesitates not to make an application of that sublime apostrophe to the Son of God.*

It will be, after all, the suggestion of some, that this is but a *delegation*. We repeat that we will not go into any abstract question of what organs and ministers of his purpose the Deity may select and prepare. We renew our concession that a work of great power does not prove an almighty agent, and a determinate result does not demonstrate an infinite cause.—Not that this can avail any argument, for the work must be always inferior to him who effectuates it.—But the argument of revelation abides! And then, if Jesus Christ be not a Divine Person, and only accomplished the creation in the capacity of an instrument, contradiction presses upon contradiction. A creature's act is said to be divine! on that service he rests his claim to divine honours! the universe expands to manifest his divine perfections! all the oracles of nature resound with his divine behests! idolatry changes its character, and he deserves to be surrounded with divine praises! evangelic mercy emanates from him, and is consequently clothed with divine credentials! he shares the burden of the omnific decree, and destroys the independence of divine avowals! The proofs of omniscience, of irresistible energy, of paramount authority, are devolved on the act of creation; if it bear *not* out the proofs, then we can never know that such attributes exist; and if it *does* bear them out, then do they converge in Christ. But such convergence

* Psalm cii. 25, 27.—and Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.

in him must be of *right*, or of *permission*: the former supposition declares that he is their Infinite Possessor,—the latter, that he is deified by an actual communication of perfections, a creature made underived, a mortal constituted self-existent, a being of frailty and want invested with omnipotence! The Saviour constantly puts his claims upon this: that he did what no other man had done, and that he did the works of the Father.

The impossibility of *delegation* is not more glaring than that of comprehending a created agent under the general language of our text, and of other portions of inspired record. "By him were *all* things *created*." "Without him was not *any* thing *made* that was made." The terms are universal and unqualified. There is not an effect he did not produce: not a being whom he did not originate. Then if a creature, he comes within his own creation! He summons himself into existence! But as this is absurd, the latitude of the ascription excludes him from every order of creatures, however exalted; and leaves him in the full and awful absoluteness of the God!

As it is inconceivable that Christianity can encourage that plurality of Gods which it has ever been the folly of men to suppose and their bane to adopt, so a consistent view must be presented by it in all its disclosures concerning the Deity. The Trine Subsistencies in the Divine Essence furnish that view. And it is in accordance with the great plan of redemption, that the principal agency in creation was undertaken by the Lord Jesus. As the Godhead is one and ineffably consentaneous, while we predicate this work of the Son, we cannot surmise the inactivity of the Father and the Spirit. "The Father worketh hitherto." "The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The reign of Christ, his present peculiar province, does not imply that God as God ceases to reign. Nor is this an uncommon necessity of interpretation. Our Lord says, "the Father judgeth no man, but

hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" but all will admit that an invariable forbearance cannot be meant, and that we must not insist on a rigid exclusion.

All, then, that has ever been appropriated to the Creator, all that inspired historians have narrated, and inspired instructors have taught, and inspired bards have sung,—is "the glory due" to the Saviour of mankind. "By his spirit he hath garnished the heaven." "He hath fashioned our hearts." Can we, after this, be betrayed into an excessive tone? Can we sing praises too lofty? Does not Nature first teach us that the Supreme is our Maker? and does not Revelation then inform us that Jesus is that Supreme?

It is only equitable to remind you that Scripture has been cited to lessen and subdue these representations: particular passages which are alleged to imply subordination and instrumentality. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." "God who created all things by Jesus Christ." "By whom also God made the worlds." The *critical* answer is, that the preposition by no means necessitates the idea of subservient action: for it is applied in cases which admit of no controverted application.* And often it intends the efficient cause.† The *theological* refutation is, that God is often said to do things by God, or, as we think, one Person by another Person of the Deity, where the second cannot be instrumental in any sense of inferiority to the first. "Jehovah rained down upon Sodom fire and brimstone from Jehovah out of heaven." "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them *by the Lord their God.*"‡ Admit the

* "Οτι εξ αυτου, και Δι' αυτου, τα παντα."—Rom. xi. 36.

† "Πιστος Θεος, Δι' ου εκληθητε κ. τ. λ."—I. Cor. i. 9.

‡ Hosea i. 7.

personal distinctions, and how simple is all! Deny them, and how every thing remains inexplicable!

Let, then, the scriptural argument be reviewed,—let these difficulties, if they still be felt to continue such, be arrayed against it,—and what will justice demand for the verdict? Invert your position,—take the difficulties for your faith, and the faith for your difficulties,—let that, which you now cannot but believe for its resistless weight, be sacrificed in behalf of the few scruples which you cannot satisfy,—have you gained a more argumentative advantage, or a more rational quietude? Is it not rather the seat of the scorner, than the strong-hold of a triumphant assurance?

But even they who "know the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,"* who see in the adorable distinction of Divine Persons, the principle which permeates and explains the whole scheme of salvation,—may not, at once, perceive the reason of that *instrumentality* which these few quotations of our opponents do, in some sense, most assuredly attach to Christ in the creation of the world. Be it, then, remembered that long ere the created system arose, the purpose of Grace was established in the Divine mind, and was the subject of a Divine arrangement. Jesus was the appointed Mediator, the Legate of the Father, the Anointed of the Spirit: "the Lord God and his Spirit" covenanted to "send him."† Creation is, therefore, a mediatorial act and dispensation: and it was a honour conferred on Christ, who was "set up of old, from everlasting," to retrieve it when it should sink into sin. Still mediation is officially subordinate: and therefore creation may be considered as much in obedience to the will of the Father who is invested with official supremacy and head-ship in the covenant, as redemption is often declared to be according to His will. And the *specific* right in the creation, which is the reward of "his obedience unto the death of the cross," is

* Col. ii. 2. † Isaiah xlviii. 16.

thus made consistent with his relative subordination,—it was a honourable distinction to create, it was a dreadful part to redeem, and the possession of all things is now founded upon the double right, that He gave them their existence, and paid for them their ransom.

The context has, however, been urged as incompatible with these claims of the Saviour. He is declared to be "the image of the invisible God, and the *first born of every creature.*" The language is expressive of *inheritance,* the peculiar dignity of Him who is ruler of the family. It alludes to his resurrection. It is desired, by the adversaries of his divinity, to include him, from this expression, among the *creatures.* But this will poorly help their wretched cause. The text is illative. It will then be their outrage upon reasoning, which they fain would foist upon Scripture,—*He is a creature,* "*for* by Him were *all things created,* that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: *all things* were created by Him, and for Him, And He is *before all things,* and by *Him all things consist!*" Is this the way they take to establish their exclusive rationalism? Or is it their method of evincing the high veneration felt by them toward the inspired volume?*

* It is proposed by them, indeed, to resolve this system, which Christ has created, into "thin air." They would treat it as a figurative description of the church on earth and in heaven. Christ was the first member of it, and founded it!! With wondrous versatility they can turn spiritual into material, and material into spiritual, things. Literal or allegorical wait alike on their wand.—Macknight is at a loss to know what is meant by "a new modelling of the angelic hierarchy," which he says is the version which some give of the text. I cannot help him out, unless the idea be taken from a batch of peerages, and a list of promotions, on some national festivity. But were he living now, he might save himself all trouble, for angels are generally voted by this school among popular errors and vulgar superstitions. — Belsham draws a comparison between Jesus Christ and Napoleon Buonaparte, to illustrate the text. And having shewn that the Emperor of France was "the creator of all new distinctions, high and low, whether thrones or dominions, &c." adds, "the language which is true of Buonaparte in a civil sense, is

We are at a loss to know how moral demonstration can be more compact and overwhelming than which may be built up from Scripture in favour of the truth, that Christ is the Creator of the universe, and that, consequently, he is the Eternal God. If the Bible is to be compared with the responses of the Delphic Oracle, or with the leaves of the Cumæan Sybil, then all its statements may be vague and undeterminate, and we may exercise our ingenuity upon them: but if it be unerring as Israel's pillar, and infallible as Urim and Thummim's sacred lot, then let us never deviate from its course, nor prevaricate with its decision. Blessed Saviour! It is no hard pass to which we come, no painful conclusion to which we are reduced, when on the brow which bent toward us, we read thine infinite majesty,—in the eye which melted over our woe, we discern thine infinite knowledge,—and when we behold thine arm, which brought salvation, "lighting down" among us, as much energized with infinite power as laden with the blessings of infinite love! "Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us!"

But if the Lord Jesus be the Maker of all things, he must have a right of the most unqualified property in them: if by him were "all things created that are in heaven and in earth," heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool,—"He is head over all things!" And this the text establishes. "*All things* were made *for* Him."

II. HAVING ATTRIBUTED ALL THOSE CONCEPTIONS TO THE SON OF GOD, WHICH ENTER INTO THE MOST ABSOLUTE SENSE OF HIS CREATIVE WORK, WE STILL FURTHER MAINTAIN THAT THIS WORK MOST UNDIVERTEDLY CONTEMPLATED HIS MEDIATORIAL POSSESSIONS AND GLORIES.

There are two species of foreknowledge ascribed to God

applicable to Jesus Christ in a moral view; but, it no more implies pre-existence, or proper creative power, in one case than in the other." What a religion must that be which needs such argument, and encourages such impiety!—LETTERS TO CARPENTER.

in the sacred volume, which are the most wonderful forms of even foreknowledge. *He is acquainted with acts, however future, having their motive in the freest agency of man.* We choose our own way: no coercion forces our will, no restraint shackles our liberty. But He ascertains what shall be that way, the object of that will, and the fruit of that liberty. "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go." "I knew," he said to his people, "that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." The murderous usurpation of Hazael was thus anticipated; Jesus "knew from the beginning who should betray him;" and though "the hands" were not the less "wicked" which perpetrated his crucifixion, yet He "was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and "those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he *so* fulfilled." "He understandeth our thought afar off."—But Jehovah *can realize what would be the issue of circumstances, if totally different from what they are.* "O that Israel had hearkened to my way! I should soon have subdued their enemies, the haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, *they had a great while ago repented,* sitting in sackcloth and ashes." "And thou, Capernaum! which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee *had been* done in Sodom, *it would have remained until this day.*" "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Here is a twofold glory,—prescience of what is determinable by the most unrestricted volition, and of what is contingent upon the most opposite results!

These principles are now to be applied: these forms of divine knowledge must now be traced in their operation.

We are assured that the universe was reared by the Son of God, for his own sake, his purpose and interest. It exists by his will, and for his use.—We are moreover assured that this is not a supplementary and amended design upon a previous derangement. It is not an appendage, something original having miscarried and failed. Often in *our* disappointments, when some speculation is defeated and some plan foiled, we avail ourselves of a second suggestion to redeem the mortifying discomfiture of the first. We would repair the discredit. We would save the wreck. We turn ourselves to that which is next in utility and importance. We cannot endure that all our sanguine measures, all our collected materials, should be reduced to confusion and converted to waste. The world having apostatized, being abandoned, has Jesus our Lord, in that crisis, consented to bend it to his cause? Thrown aside, as a thwarted and alienated thing, did he then first determine to take it up into his counsels and agencies? Did he only then stamp on it the characters of his property, and impress on it the conditions of his employment? No: it is his *workmanship*, his *instrument:* it was launched from his hand, it rolls in his service! Here is the reason of its primeval construction and of its perpetuated course. This is the only solution of its varied phenomena, the only moral of its mysterious scenery, the only scope of its massive architecture. This is the cause which arrests the conflagration of the elements, and which detains the signal prepared to announce "that time shall be no longer." But for this, the sun would cease to cheer us in our days and seasons; earth would dispread one blasted waste of thorns and briars; and every spot would disclose the bed of the dying or the bier of the dead. This is the upholding principle, the conservative element,—the retrieving counter-check against the dreadful penalty, and the equally dreadful tendency, which would hurry it to despair and sink it in ruin!

But it is impossible for even the dullest apprehension to overlook the difficulty which lies in these statements: for if this world was raised for the exhibition of Christianity, for the developement of its truths, and the distribution of its blessings,—it renders *certain* (a more correct term than *inevitable*) the introduction of sin. In some sense it *does;* but not by originating it,—not by necessitating it,—not with any complacency of adaptation,—not with any manner of connivance,—not with any construction that it is a congenial agent, or disguised good. But if such be the prologue of the awful drama, there is no more objection to it as a comprehensive anticipation of the whole forward to its final catastrophe, than can be raised against the prediction of its several parts. Many prophecies declare that such wicked men shall arise, and such wicked acts shall be performed: it must be *certain*, then, such shall be the event, but the event does not depend upon the prophecies. Besides, there is a class of futuritions, which we may denominate *negative certainties.* That a *creature* must be imperfect, and limited, and dependent, simply requires the proof that he *is* a creature. That no creature can be otherwise formed, only wants the proof of the self-evident fact, that no creature can be independent of Him who formed him. That such a creature is justly dealt with in being left to the necessary laws of his nature, merely asks the proof which arises from the inverse proposition that then it must be unjust to form any creature at all. That no moral sustentation is due to the creature, but seeks the proof that favour or grace is no term of justice, and can never be needed to set it with a honourable aspect before the intelligent universe. And on these grounds the defection of man was certain, as most *justly treated,* as most *freely left,* as most *infallibly foreseen!* For as little can these negative certainties be questioned as the noblest demonstration of mathematical truth, which is,

after all, evolved from a point, a thing of no quantity, and really a nothing.*

It will be objected that there is no variety of evil which God could not prevent. This is one of those views of omnipotence, which we hold to be most unfounded. If it be intended that almightiness need not have made rational creatures, what is the value of the gratuitous remark? If it be meant that such power can interfere to change the necessary tendency, or can be employed to alter the laws, of moral agents, we deny that it ever existed in the Divine Being or ever can. To say that *power* could have excluded sin from the creation, is a most illogical and inapposite statement; for it either denotes that it might have forbidden the existence of acccountable nature,—or that, such accountable nature existing, it might have imposed violent restraint upon it. And therefore we feel ourselves justified in avowing — harsh as the denial may sound, opposing all the rules of thinking as many may deem it, —that the moral constitution of intelligent creatures being once presumed, *God could not, in their simply equitable regimen, and according to their unquestionably moral probation, prevent the entrance of sin!*

Let us then consider the operation of that Infinite Intelligence concerning which we have spoken. He, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," discriminated what the *most perfect freedom would accomplish*, and what the *most inverted condition of man's first nature would ensure*. These we propound as facts. Moral rectitude and moral accountability are our stays. Whatever the apparent collision, both are equally attested and

* I believe that greatest master of Divinity, that more than Augustine of our age, the late Rev. Dr. Edward Williams, of Rotherham, has somewhere in his writings a similar figure. I remember not where it is to be found. It will be a happy bait to that man who will be content to seek it, though he should find it in the last sentence his mortal hand ever impressed! When he is read and understood, the deterioration of the modern ministry (and some assert it) will be an unsupported charge.

equally credible. And foreseeing these results, was the Divine Being to abandon his creation, to leave upon it "the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness?" Was it unworthy of his government, which undertakes our world as its trust and care, to mark each crisis, overrule each perversion, and provide for each exigency? Should it be subject to surprise, and unprepared for dilemma? Ought it not to be ready to turn to its own advantage and vindication the malice of its foes? Can an entire dereliction of the race to destruction, be the only method in which it can disabuse itself of all connivance at human rebellion? Nor is our ignorance solitary here. Many consequences are certain, though we know not the reason or the medium by which they are educed. Moral certainties, the most general ground of confidence, are not easily explained: the deductions of science it would be more than arduous, in frequent instances, to connect with their elementary axioms: while the relations of cause and effect, which at first may appear so simple, still confound the keenest speculations, and excite the most conflicting opinions. After the same manner, though in an infinitely higher degree, we must forget our littleness and exceed our province, when we attempt to define the awful intervals between what divine omniscience clearly foreknew, and divine purity must abhor, and divine government does permit.

And though the hypothesis which conceives the bower of Adam to be prepared as the abode of innocence, and which asserts the race that he federally represented to possess in him the liberty of pursuing faultless immortal excellencies,—is doubtless just and incontestibly true; yet we are warranted to rest on a purpose anterior to formation, and more stable than the caprice, of man. We know that man had the choice and power of good and evil; we know that his freedom was not, to the most imaginable point, interrupted and infringed; we know

that there is not a sophism more perverse and guilty than that which the ancient transgressors employed—"We are delivered to do these abominations;" we know that sin is what, we are most fully authorized to say, *God would not to exist and continue;* we know that nothing but its foresight, its hatred, and its determined counteraction, can be admitted into his councils or allied to his plans;—but we are also constrained to acknowledge (sweet necessity that is laid upon us!) that Christ created the world for himself, resolving to restore what would be alienated, and to establish what would be disputed; thus becoming its owner, and constituting it a *primary contrivance,* an *original vehicle,* for that great exercise of mercy which is denominated "the gospel of the grace of God." For if made by Christ in his distinctive character, it must be for the distinctive transaction which that character supposes,—having as little reference to a state of innocence as it has to an award of vengeance. He "came not to destroy men's lives:" he "came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." He therefore projected its scale and drew its map; fixed the axis on which it should turn, and the orbit within which it should travel. Hence we read of "the eternal purpose purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;" of "the hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" of "the hidden wisdom which God ordained, before the world, unto our glory;" of "the precious blood of Christ who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." Did not these designs require a developement, and was not such developement the plan after which this fabric was hewn, the pattern according to which this temple was constructed?

Fact, indeed, seems more opposed to the conclusion that "all things were made for Christ," than even theoretic difficulty. The world, upon a most cursory recollection

of history, upon a most superficial glance over the present, stands forth in absolute contradiction. Its race is in revolt, and "abased unto hell;" and itself is abused to crime, and made subject to vanity. The phraseology of Scripture habituates and obliges us to speak of it as a world whose course is sinful, whose repulsion is to all goodness, and whose "friendship is enmity with God." It even compels us to stamp a stronger complexion on our remarks; for this world has a *prince* and a *god* of its *own!* It has formally thrown off its proper allegiance, and apostatized from its proper devotion; it has openly avowed its preference of that Accursed Spirit who enthrals and defiles it, and has elaborately converted itself into the usurper's hold and the idol's house!

So fearful have been the crimes acted upon the stage of our world,—such have been its convulsions and plunges of iniquity,—that we are told, though then its days were young, "It repented God that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Yet this only expresses his view of our nature's evil failure, and his sense of the odiousness which marks its defection from rectitude and obedience: and strong as is the language, it derogates nothing from his infinite complacency in recovering that very nature, nothing from his delight in that mercy he has exercised toward it, nothing from "the good pleasure of his goodness" in that great system of redemption which has swallowed up every purpose, and superinduced itself upon every law, of the Creation,—its noblest bulwark and its concentrated glory!

It may be tauntingly said, that scarcely a sign exists of this appropriation of all things to Christ, that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We may select an illustration, by no means inapt, from one portion of the earth; and thus we shall reason from the particular to the general. Canaan was destined, when each circumstance was most unpropitious, to be the

goodly heritage and holy land, devoted to the ministrations of the divine worship, and consecrated by the symbols of the divine presence. It was given by promise unto Abraham. His descendants were to form the Israelitish Church. It was from that moment their's. Its localities were described, together with their use, ages before that church had passed its frontier. Even Zion was noted in the sublime song of Moses, though he was never to enter the promised territory, and though forty years transpired ere he caught its distant prospect: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the *mountain of thine inheritance*, in the place, O Lord, which thou *hast made* for thee to dwell in, in the *Sanctuary*, O Lord, *which thy hands have established*."* How was it then that they were so long excluded from possession? "The wickedness of the Amorites was not yet full." But "Judah was saved, and Israel dwelt safely," after the long term of centuries which had been originally forewarned. And then we behold them occupying that fair country,—its citizens rather than its conquerors. Yet still that "mountain" was impregnable against them. Hundreds of years rolled on, and it was still a fortress of their idolatrous enemies. And it was in a far subsequent period, that from the steep of that long-allotted hill, "on the sides of the north," arose the Temple where Jehovah had of old determined to record his name and find his rest. Was this a later consideration? Or was the applicability of Palestine for the nation, and Zion for the temple, accidental? Was it then discovered that the area of the country was of the adequate admeasurement; and that the mountains round about Jerusalem did furnish a platform, a buttress-ledge, most eligible for that awful pile? We can answer these questions in inspired strain: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set

* Exodus xv. 7.

the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." For this constitution of things regarded the religious benefit of *mankind*. "Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her."* And Paul reasons upon the same purport of the facts: "He hath determined the times appointed, and the bounds of their habitations, that they should seek the Lord," their opportunities favouring, and their vicinities assisting, so important an end. Nor is it more improbable that earth shall yield itself to the sovereignty of Immanuel, and that he shall be Lord over its whole extent, than that the land of the Amorite should be filled with a people who "were holiness unto the Lord," and that the citadel of Jebus should be displaced for the temple to which kings brought presents, and in which a nation adored!

And we are supported in this view of earth's first design and final destiny, by the manner in which "the thoughts of peace and not of evil" were breathed to our original parents. We had rebelled, and the day of our transgression declined apace. How do we shudder when we think of its hurrying moments and falling shades! How do we tremble with the fugitives, and seek out their retreats! The Lord God descends! His voice is heard while he walks in the garden! Surely "the indignation is accomplished!" Surely the blow shall now be struck! Oh, wondrous reversal of the sentence! He "will have mercy." "He will abundantly pardon." He is "come to seek and to save that which is lost." That evening shall not close in despair. That sun shall not go down on wrath. "The cool of the day" brings with it a token of pity, placid as its calm,—soft as its twilight,—gentle as its dew,—soothing as its lull,—beautiful as its western sky,—fair as its vesper star! All was then ready to be

* Ezek. v. 5.

divulged. All was then adjusted for immediate operation. In that earliest promise all the rudiments of human salvation were comprehended. Every economy, every fact, in the history of redemption, has only been its enlarged construction and progressive fulfilment. And we know that there was a heaven for the penitent child of man even then provided, and that a "door was opened in it" for his entrance, since "the *kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world.*"* And when we observe the absence of all surprise from the divine announcement, together with the undelayed disclosure of a plan which at once began to extend its cheering influence, and took a grasp of all earthly time and interest,—we cannot withstand the proof that redemption is the key to creation, and that "all things were made *by* Christ and *for him.*"

There is a species of proof very delicate in itself, but yet capable of forming a strong addition to the evidence that our earth was created to receive the mysterious manifestation of the Eternal Son. We all admit the adaptation of the external system to human wants and circumstances. We must all admit that,—notwithstanding the moral defection of our race, and the consequent change in the external system,—much of this adaptation is preserved. Nor is that change, so far as we can trace it, of the extreme character which might have been augured from the magnitude of the defection. If we may be allowed the remark, we should say that the very conditions of innocence were framed with a reference to a facility of transition from a former to the present state of things. Why was man "taken out of the ground?" Why was not his material texture woven of finer and more ethereal elements? Can we evade the conclusion of the expected and certain issue? Can we doubt that the creature who *would die,* was constructed of materials so gloriously transformed that the workmanship triumphed over their

* Matt. xxv. 34.

inferiority, yet of materials which were fitted by their own nature to corrupt, to resolve into their first atoms, and readily to sink into all the humiliations of death? Thus did He, who made the world, place our unfallen nature in perfect happiness; but still, knowing its self-determined course, prepared a *natural order* of punishment, which should only in the least degree disturb the general system; and raised a fabric upon a plan so true to his foreknowledge, that it could be left to settle,—though modified, not deranged, by the most fearful vicissitude!

The subserviency of his works to his purposes requires a more distinct illustration; and we may trace in them

I. The scenes of his mediation.

While many theories have been broached on the reasons of the Deity in selecting for the stupendous scheme of mercy a world so diminutive, a race so insignificant,—it is sufficient for us to state that we know not that any others are involved in the guilt to require it. We are quite willing to speak of our nature as most *depraved*, but we must contest every imputation that it is *mean*. Nothing intelligent, accountable, immortal, is or can be of little importance. Against mind and eternity, the comparative smallness of our planet, and the absolute feebleness of our corporeal structure, cannot be seriously weighed. The argument of dimensions is gross and blind. — And this earth does take a rank of precedence, even overlooking its moral interest; for it would seem that from its original elements the sun was lighted up, that it commenced the train in which other worlds were fabricated, that it will implicate some in its destruction, and "draw a part of the stars of heaven" after it. But the safer exposition of the divine conduct is this: that we being chiefly, if not exclusively, the objects, our globe was most suitable for the transaction; that if there were other purposes, it still contained facilities and offered occasions which perhaps none other possessed; that any system of mercy not

immediately proposed, not expressly adapted, to our condition, must fall short of it; that whatever expedient was capable of removing our guilt and "countervailing our damage," may easily reach upward and spread widely, may embrace the most remote varieties, may release the most intricate combinations, of circumstances in which other creatures can be placed, may bear on all orders of intelligence and all classes of being, may vibrate to the extremities of the universe. And we *know* that *this* economy of grace, though it descends not low enough to rescue fiends, rises sufficiently high to unite and establish angels. And, therefore, whether it have ulterior intentions or not, the mediation of Christ has adopted this earth as its principal scene and centre.

It was the stage of his advent. "He came into the world." "He came in the flesh." "He dwelt among us." His conception, birth, life, death, entombment, were "of this building." He was "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven." He who said, "Let us make man," was "made of a woman." And that track of earth in which he drew his first breath and heaved his last, hallowed by his agony and crucifixion, is therefore denominated "Immanuel's land." Thither he "descended," and "came down from heaven." In his human nature it was an actual change of place and relation. That He should walk our earth! be subject to the skiey influences! be tossed by the raging waves! toil along the dusty roads! suffer thirst and hunger! have a place where he abode,* only less a wonder than that he should not have where to lay his head! O favoured orb! What footsteps once impressed, what eyes once surveyed, thee! Whom didst thou bear, though transfixed on a cross, and buried in a grave!

It is the site of his church. Here is "the rock whence it is hewn, and the hole of the pit whence it is digged."

* John i. 39.

Here too is "the foundation laid, the precious corner-stone." It is gathered out of all nations, and from the four winds. Other beginning it cannot have, though its perfection is in those first-born members who are written in heaven. It must have its birth and nourishment in the present state. From guilt and depravity it is called, redeemed and sanctified. And well is it for the earth that it contains this "peculiar people." They are the dew, the salt, the light, the "everlasting foundation," the "substance," of it. Judgment is arrested for their sake: "I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." "Hurt not the earth, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads." And the language of Scripture clearly expresses the subordination of all things to their benefit: "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth; and say unto Zion, Thou art my people."* Nor shall their dignities be long deferred: but "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High."†

It is the sphere of his influence. Of the spirit it is said, "The world seeth him not." He is the "Spirit of Christ," and carries on the most singular operations. And within the circuit of our earth, though millions remain unconscious, he pours a spiritual light into the understanding, and infuses a divine light into the heart. As there is a perpetual virtue emitted through the kingdoms of nature, moulding new forms and repairing old decays,—putting forth energy and beauty;—so a virtue, equally inscrutable, moves in the minds and consciences of men, creative as well as restorative, by which all the visions of moral loveliness are passing into reality,—hidden seeds are swelling to fruits of holiness, and rising to trees of righteousness,

* Isaiah li. 16. † Daniel vii. 27.

plastic powers begin to unfold the fair scenery of the new heavens and the new earth!

It is the receptacle of his most complacent operations. It is evident that creation must stand in the order of means to an end. It is evident that the end can be the only equivalent for the labour and expense of the means. It is evident that this end is human redemption. This is the treasure which enriches the field, the diadem which gives splendour to the palace, and the shrine which constitutes the holiness of the sanctuary. In comparison with all other purposes, this is pre-eminent above them all, as the temple is to the gold, and the altar to the gift. It is "the pleasure of the Lord." "The principalities and powers learn from the church the manifold wisdom of God." This was the "joy set before" the Saviour. This "satisfies" him for "the travail of his soul." Oh! not when he nerves the warrior's arm, not when he kindles the statesman's ardour, not when he directs the philosopher's research, does he rejoice in his noblest workmanship, does he smile upon his dearest success;—but when he exhibits his grace in the renovation of minds, the conversion of hearts, the salvation of souls,—then he bodies out his fulness of purpose,—rests in his love,—and overlooking all meaner things, disdaining all inferior spoils, leaves this vast result for "a name, an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off."

It is the arena of his most glorious victories. Heaven once rung with the shout of conflict, and Satan, with his host, was hurled down to hell. It must have been a momentary strife which demanded but one crushing repulse of power. "Neither was their place found any more in heaven." But circumstances render the terrestrial war of another character and duration. And from the moment, when "enmity was set" between the Woman's Seed and the Tempter in Eden, down to the crisis of the final decision at Armageddon, the battle has never failed, nor can the

combatants be parted. And He who has "girded his sword upon his thigh," has followed one career of triumph. Success has he made sure, and added to success. At intervals he has cheered his soldiers, "As I have overcome." He has been seen by them at the different stages of the contest, "Conquering and to conquer." And long as earth shall endure, the pedestal shall expand upon which his monument is built, and new trophies shall be brought in to be hung around it!

It was only likely that when *we* were informed of the use to which the Lord Jesus devoted his universe, that the particular notice should be of *our earth.* But when we recollect the transactions of infinite importance which have occurred upon it, the improbability of similar events in any other, the manner in which they engaged the everlasting mind, their celebration in heaven and through eternity, we need not wonder that it is a focal point of interest and instruction to all beings and worlds. Nor will it be reasonably objected that our planet is comparatively small, and therefore cannot be thus sublimely distinguished. What has that to do with the selection? Is it not the method of divine conduct to "exalt them of low degree?" Is not such an experiment of awful principles, independent of the platform? And as the natal city of the Saviour was "the least among the cities of Judah," and yet the new luminary, the "consenting planet" of heaven, gleamed a vertical ray on its littleness, its trembling turret, and mouldering wall;—so, were our habitation reduced a thousand-fold from its present dimensions, still would it be great and illustrious in the lessons it has taught, in the measures it has matured, and in the triumphs it has unfolded!

And not only is earth the principal scene of the Saviour's mediation, heaven likewise sustains its part. "Amidst the glory which He had with the Father before the world began," he expatiated in the prospect of the world which

should be formed, and "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth." "For our sakes he returned on high," but he "entered not without blood," but with it "purified the heavenly things themselves." "He maketh peace in high places." "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Redemption is the concentrating attraction to every order of the celestial inhabitants, and forms their "new song!"

Nor is there a spot of space but which he could command, if a vantage ground for his purpose. Is it heaven? He is there! Is it the invisible world? He is there! Is it the uttermost part of the sea? He is there! Is it the outer verge of space? It is not outlawed from his authority, nor rent from his control. Every where he could fix the awful machinery to move the moral universe, and all the stars of the firmament would follow his Sun-banner, and fight in their courses for him.

All things were "made for Christ," as they are

II. THE TRIBUTARIES TO HIS PRAISE.

This is not doubtful of "things in heaven," of the heavenly orders. "Thrones" fall down before him, "Dominions" obey, "Principalities" discrown themselves in his presence, "Powers" yield. "All the angels of God worship him." "All are made subject unto him."

And it is worthy of notice, that when in the humblest condition of humanity, when he "made himself of no reputation," when "many were astonished at his marred image and form," there was always a contrast, a redeeming might, which vindicated his superior nature and universal rule. He is *born*, and the choirs of heaven salute the swaddled child. He is *circumcised*, and beneath a supernatural influence the aged saints confess him, and then depart to die. He is *tempted*, and angels minister to him. He is *baptized*, and the Holy Ghost, in the bodily shape of a dove, rests upon his head. He *hungers*, and feeds thousands at his will. He *thirsts*, and turns water into wine. He *slumbers*, and awakes to still the tempest. He *weeps*,

and calls the corrupting dead from the grave. He is in an *agony*, and a voice thunders from heaven that as he had been glorified, he shall be glorified again. He is taken *captive*, and more than twelve legions of ministering spirits hover round him, impatient to rescue him. He is *put to death*, and throws open Paradise. He is *laid in the tomb*, and an earthquake rolls away the stone to release him who could not be holden of death, and whose flesh could not see corruption.

And "all things" have owned, and served, and glorified him! Especially may we notice the devotement of the visible system to him, in all its properties, agents, and operations. Among these we may enumerate

Natural symbols. We think there is nothing extravagant in the sentiment, that the most striking signs of the external world were contrived on purpose to represent and recommend him, and were intended to construct a language adapted to this principle, and not arbitrarily wrested and constrained. And whither can we turn but bright syllables are imprinted of a Saviour's worth? and full-toned voices reach us, which enounce his glory? Sun, and star, and tree, and rock, and river, are the ready mediums of comparison, and are consecrated as the universal speech, whose "sound is gone out into all the earth, and its words unto the end of the world." "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" "They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations." The objects of physical nature were not alone thus appropriated as his shadows,—He has called forth

Personal representatives. They who had an individual existence, and pursued an accountable history, were often taken out of their own station, lifted above their own sphere, and transformed into living types of his office and character. Even Adam, the least probable likeness of a deliverer and redeemer, does not pass into his grave with-

out having been exhibited for a "sign," and was presented to his posterity, not only as their destroyer, but as "the figure of Him that was to come." Nor do we properly conceive of this representation when we place it upon a coincidence: the resemblance was determined for the type, not the type determined upon the resemblance, as Melchisedec was "*made like unto* the Son of God." And still there are those who walk our earth as his remembrancers and imitators,—who are his retrospective types, —they are "the glory of Christ," "because as he is, so are they in this world." — But nature inert, and even immaterial, yielded to his

Miraculous authority. The material world was his servant and ready instrument. A new luminary took its place in heaven, and was the auspice of his birth. "The winds and sea obeyed him." The deaf heard his most soothing whisper; the blind gazed after him who had given them sight; the dumb, with the ecstacy of their new faculty, spake his goodness and sang his praise; the loathsome crust of leprosy fell, and the ghastly array of death unloosed, before him: — and having thus made matter and its laws passive to him, he not only gathered an eclipse around his cross, and soared buoyant on "the wings of the wind" to heaven, but he healed distempered minds, — commanded demons and they fled, — recalled spirits and they returned! — And we learn that there ascends to him

Incessant homage. We want a finer sense, and then we might perceive that there was a service, and a service of praise, extorted from his enemies. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose I have raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." He "surnames" a Cyrus, though that prince "had not known him." The Assyrian, though "he meant not so, neither

did his heart think so," was "the rod of his anger." "He hath created the waster to destroy." "God puts in the heart of the ten kings to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." And the effect of these combined agencies is stated to be most harmonious; and one who stood in a more favourable position than ourselves, "heard *every creature* which is in *heaven*, and on *earth*, and *under* the *earth*, saying: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

But "all things" are "for Christ," since they are

III. THE ACCESSARIES TO HIS PURPOSE.

The great events of science and art are left to the general operation of the human mind, though we do not exclude the continued direction of Deity. But man, as merely an intellectual being, is not chiefly the object of his care. His interpositions take place in our moral history, and for our religious good. And we may observe the subserviency of human inventions to these superior purposes. Why were they not earlier? The discovery of the compass? The revolution of the earth? The expedient of printing? The moral sense of man was not roused, the utility of these instruments of knowledge could not be therefore secured, and "the fulness of times" was necessarily delayed. We deny not that this delay is wrapped up in deep mystery. Yet the advocates of the natural sufficiency of reason in all affairs of religion, gain nothing by advantageous comparison. Have they outstripped Revelation in the race? Did they sooner read their volume of earth and sky? But there is one view of this delay which we think generally neglected, though important. The loss of the *first revelation* of divine things is always pointed out by Scripture to have been wilful and most guilty. "The times of this ignorance God winked at;" not by indifference, not by connivance,—not in forbearing to punish, not in re-

fusing to amend,—but in *positive retribution;* punishing by his most effectual manner of *abandoning,* "giving up," "letting alone," and "casting off;" "suffering all nations to walk in their own ways." The delay was, therefore, at least in part, *judicial.* And as we know that "Christ is God over all," he superintended all those preliminaries, and allowed all those postponements, which might be necessary to give men a clear idea of the Gospel, a just impression of its evidence, and so favourably to usher it in before men, that it might be raised beyond the most captious suspicion. And in these statements we must not forget that "the gospel was preached" ere the garden of innocence was closed upon us, and was efficacious to "every one who believed" during the four thousand years which preceded its more economical establishment.

This world is, therefore, not "a wandering star," abandoned in wrath, discarded from use, rushing to destruction, but is still held for a design, and turned to an account, the most glorious. Its Maker has not renounced nor disowned his property. It may be a rebel, but he is still its Sovereign: it may be a recusant, but he is still its Lord. And through the ancient story of our race, we can mark satisfactory proofs of his continued control and activity,—apparent episodes of the great drama, but really preserving its unity, and hastening its catastrophe! Where shall we go in quest of illustration?

Enter the harvest-field of Bethlehem. There is a gleaner following the reapers, who is a subject of interest, not only to all that know her affliction, but to all that can anticipate her posterity. "Her hap to light" was the guidance of Providence and verification of Prophecy: "how the matter fell" was weighed in an eternal balance. And hence sprung "a name which was famous in Israel," and the line is perpetuated "whose are the fathers, and of whom Christ came." The Moabitess, who left her land to "put her trust under the wings of the Lord God

of Israel," is honoured as the ancestral mother of the Redeemer; and not only could boast of a David as her descendant, but David's Lord.

Enter the palace of Shushan. A veil is lifted up, and we behold a new class of agencies employed to introduce the Christian dispensation. There is an orphan maid; she is next seen with the royal crown of Persia upon her head; her foster-parent being privileged, in consequence, to sit in the king's gate, detects a conspiracy against the life of the king; a proud courtier is offended at the disrespect shewn him by this kinsman of the queen; he seeks in his anger the destruction of the church; having well plotted it, he becomes intoxicated by the favours heaped upon him; he consents to a means of revenge, pitiful in its malignity; and then a restless fever in the veins of the monarch, leads to his bitter discomfiture in the triumph of his rival, and in his obligation to pronounce it; he his hurried on to his fate; the covenanted race, which he would exterminate, are rescued and avenged; while even the heathen acknowledge that "he has fallen before the seed of the Jews," and all must allow that the bereft and captive daughter of that people "came to the kingdom for such a time as this."

But it is unnecessary to trace the manifold ways in which all things have been administered to promote the cause of Christ. And now that "the government is upon his shoulder," now that he is officially advanced to the magistrature of the universe,—the activities of intellect, the discoveries of enterprise, the accumulations of wealth, the vicissitudes of empire, the revolutions of time, the assaults of infidelity, the machinations of hell, shall fall into his plan, and be made occasions of his glory. "All things must be gathered together in Christ." "All his enemies shall be made his footstool." And he shall at last exclaim, in assertion of his complete subjection of every adverse power to his sway, "*It is done:* I am Alpha

and Omega, *the beginning* and *the end, the first* and *the last.*"

And here He will erect his final monarchy. We disclaim any aggrandisement but that which is spiritual. And as "he was the desire of all nations," as "the powers of heaven were shaken" for his manifestation, so all things shall contribute to introduce him. "He shall come whose right it is." "He shall take to himself his great power, and reign." "He shall have dominion from sea to sea." "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." And when every government shall but reflect divine justice, and every subject shall but obey true religion,—then, when the Gospel is written in every law, and is seated in every breast,—when Christianity is the only standard of jurisdiction, and the only measure of allegiance,—then, when the temper of Jesus shall be the spirit, and the testimony of Jesus shall be the letter, of every code,—when authority is without pride, fealty without distrust, and love without dissimulation,—then, when holy truth has spread its leaven through the entire mass, as well as each separate element, of civilized life and social being,—then "voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, Now is come the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." "The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." "The heathen are his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth are his possession." And that we might not despair, he left not our world ere he had proclaimed: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

And, did we not fear too large an extension of the discourse, we might argue the CONNECTION between the Saviour's creation and proprietorship of all things: justice to the subject forbids its total neglect.

A more important inquiry cannot arise: Is our *Maker* also our *Saviour?* Does He, whose command filled

Nothing with matter, and gave beauty to the Formless mass, bear our nature, and "plead our cause?" Does He, who spread abroad the heavens as a curtain, and a tent to dwell in, build the refuge of our hope? It is a joyous hour when we can conclude: "He that is our God, is the God of salvation."

And at once we are impressed with the *difficulty* of our salvation. Constituting the design of this created system, it must be a more worthy deed than creation itself. Yet can we imagine no power greater than is necessary to create, and Scripture does not encourage and warrant us to do so. Then that energy which is the highest in our conception, and which, according to inspired authority, is ultimate, is demanded to recover us from the effects of sin. What must be that "abominable thing!" How appalling must be the ruin which it has entailed upon us! If that "very word of grace" which saves us, were not "strong as that which built the skies:"* if that "arm did not bring salvation," on which universal nature hangs its weight; our case were hopeless, our doom inevitable, our species lost! The crisis came; and "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" A moral creation sprung up in its own loveliness; man stood once more erect "after the image of Him who created him;" our fallen nature beamed forth again as "His workmanship in Christ Jesus;" and that Power which peopled immensity with being, and illuminated it with a thousand suns, still operates with its fullest energies in the production of spiritual light, vitality, and beauty.

And not less distinctly are we taught, by this connection, the *efficiency* of the "great salvation." The heart has its tremors and misgivings, and will sometimes inquire whether there be put forth all that strength to save, which was required to create, us? whether there be all that *earnestness* and *determination* of purpose which the prodigious

* Watts.

monuments of constituted nature attest? But what should be the heart's relief when we discover that our salvation is the *cause* of all that the universe contains of vast, and fair, and radiant; that it impresses the law of every atom, and the motion of every world; that the Creator stamps his seal upon it, and enforces it equally with his most tremendous mandates; that he bids the spirit go in peace, undisturbed as the sublime emanations which constantly spread from him through his works; that he prescribes the holy liberty of the regenerate, who sustains the moon when she walks in brightness with her sisterhood of stars; that he ordains the life of the soul who is the author of existence so multifarious and boundless, that the difficulty is to shew what is not living entity and structure; that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." This is "a propriety none can feel" "but who can smiling say," My Saviour "made them all!"* O ye who tremble because He is omnipotently great, because he doeth wonders, because yon heavens with their hosts are his, because he can kill both body and soul, because he can blast with a breath and wither with a frown,—never did his might unfold itself as in this operation of mercy; and though the fact of "Christ crucified" may appear to veil and frustrate "the exceeding greatness of this power," it is its noblest medium, its grandest proof, its brightest spectacle, "It is the Power of God."

A *fitness* is apparent in this arrangement. Our earth, being dishonoured, the measures to avenge or purify it must be with Him who had made it. The cause is his. No interposition could be suggested to him, much less forced upon him. He alone can act. But if he so determine, we cannot fail to admire the moral propriety of his agency. He had "dedicated this house," and he now will see whether the dedication has been respected. No other power could have the right to cast it down, or to

* Cowper.

renew its original intention. He has resolved to rescue our world. Hence arises the meetness of deriving the reparation from Him who is aggrieved, and the pardon from Him with whom it was to punish. Surely the Creator knows the value of his works and the nature of his laws; what can retrieve the wrong done to the one, and expiate the insult offered to the other; and if He be "well pleased," whence can arise demur? "It is God that justifieth." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He is therefore described as claiming his people: "I will say to the north, Give up: and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth: even every one that is called by my name: for I *have created him for my glory*, I have formed him; yea I have made him." And inanimate nature is represented as rejoicing with sympathy in the redemption of man: as is invoked by Him to expressions of a jubilant gladness: "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." "Drop down, ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together: I *the Lord have created it.*"

And thus a *parallelism* and *analogy*, is constituted between the material and moral systems; and signs are borrowed from the one to denote the other. "He who sitteth on the throne saith, Behold I make all things new." A sun of righteousness bursts out to dispel spiritual darkness; the troubled sea, which cast up mire and dirt, is hushed and cleansed; earth yields her increase; instead of the thorn there comes up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar the myrtle-tree; man is a new creature in Christ Jesus; the law of the Spirit of life stirs a sweetly freshening balm; the new heavens and the new earth are

so resplendent, that the former cannot "be remembered nor come into mind." Nor is this all: the world of nature ministers to the world of grace, and to it at once owes its existence, and its respite from the final doom.

And it is worthy of notice that in those strongest passages where the Deity challenges any rival, where he assures us that "he is the Lord, and that there is no God beside him," where he calls upon his creatures to "know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside him,"—the Lord Jesus is certainly intended.* "I have sworn by myself, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue swear." So that His supreme divinity and personal distinction, are at the same time unequivocally averred.

And most rightful is his possession of all things. "His hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and his right hand hath spanned the heavens: when he called unto them, they stood up together." "They were made for him." He built our earth to be an ark of safety, and a sanctuary of mercy. He spread over it the covering of his atonement, and will sway it with the sceptre of his grace. "The people shall fall under him." "Every thought shall be brought into captivity to his obedience." And the world, which he created and which he saved, shall confess his title, and bring forth its diadem of many crowns to place upon the head of Him who is "the Efficient Cause of the creation of God!" When therefore we are engaged in promoting the "knowledge of Christ," and seek that he may be "the head of the heathen," how perfect must be our confidence that it is an authorized and agreeable course of action. Our Creator and our Saviour alike commands us, we carry out the primary intentions of the natural and moral constitutions, we co-extend with the already laid foundation the already adapted superstructure, we but sanctify the material scaffolding by building within

* Isaiah xlv. 6—compared with Rom. xiv. 10, 11—Philip. ii. 10, 11.

it a holy temple unto the Lord, and consummate each physical law with the triumphs of Revelation! Well, when we "go out" with such an errand, may "the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands:" we are their legitimate interpreters, faithful votaries, and appointed heralds! We publish the reason of the incomprehensible mystery which shrouds the sensible phenomena around us; and, as with the mighty voices which echo from height and depth, resound the glad tidings of a pardoned race and ransomed world!

And what does the adversary of Christ the Son of God, in a world sacred to the cause for which it was fashioned out of nothing, and which has drank in the blood of the covenant? Sacrilegious intruder, what dost thou here? What mean those evil eyes, and desecrating footsteps? Comest thou to dispute thy Maker's purpose, and thy Saviour's claim? Thou art in the most guarded province of his creation and dominion! The apparatus of his redemption was here deposited! Here stood the cross! And is it here that thou breathest out thine impious rebellions? And is it here that thou wouldest disturb each scene, and each dispensation? But before thou canst invalidate the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, before thou canst smite in pieces his altar, begin thy havoc on the walls of the temple! Blot out the sun! Tear down the firmament! Spurn the pavement-earth beneath thy feet! Thou must demolish the universal frame of nature, ere thou canst prevail against that Messiah whose voice first bade it rise,—and whose interests can alone account for its long existence!

Alas! what a world now turns round to Heaven its cities and populations! What cries of defiance rise from it! What spectacles of shame are exhibited upon it! It is the Star of each idol-god,—it is the Star-Wormwood of bitter ingratitude and treason to the only Living One!

"How long, O Lord, holy and true!" Set it, Thou who "bringest out the host of heaven by number," the holiest among those orbs! Thou who "callest them all by their names," appropriate to it Thine own! And when "the morning stars sing together," may the music of *our redeemed sphere* be sweetest,—fullest,—loudest,—of them all!—AMEN.

THE END.

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